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The Misfit

ANN MARY FIELDING

ASSAM, the half-caste wagon-boy, sat with his thin legs tucked under him on the top rail of the kraal and watched the commotion of cattle waiting to be dipped. He did not laugh or sing or chatter like the crowd of blacks who always hung around on dip day, nor did he whistle like Mr Tanner, the new white baas, who stood, stern, and lean, and nonchalant, at the edge of the Kerrol dip. He sat completely alone, silent and withdrawn on the rail, whilst the dust from the cattle hung like a mist around him and the flies crept unnoticed over his coffee-coloured body.

The vastness of brazen sky above him, of yellow veld all round, accentuated his isolation, which went deeper than a physical solitude. Created out of the mixture of races which composed his being, it went deeper than his own comprehension, producing only a sense of loneliness and abandonment which had become a part of him.

Above his head the sky was leaden with the heat and against it the snow-white egrets which perched on the cattle's backs looked dazzling and unreal. As he watched them, the small switch in his hand scratched first

the tough red hide of an Africander cow, then the widespread horn of a humped ox.

They were a good herd, all Africanders—except one. That one, an ugly black beast with a white belly, Assam could see now outside the kraal taking cover behind a clump of m'hobba hobba trees. All the time his eyes were on the cattle in the kraal one part of himself was following the ox's movements, while the other part waited for a summons from the white man.

'Assam!' called Mr Tanner at last across the heads of the cattle.

The boy slid off the rail and stiffened to attention. 'Yes, baas.' Standing there, small, lean, dun-coloured as the veld around him, he was all but invisible.

'Assam!' shouted the white man again, more loudly.

Assam went then, quickly, trotting on his bare feet over the grass towards the dip, his sharp face alert, anxious, his deep mysterious eyes turning this way, that way.

The white man made him nervous. In the presence of white men he sensed always their subconscious mistrust, their innate resentment that some part of their own race and blood

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flowed through his own body, and this master in particular was a new master, his depths and power and angers as yet unfathomed. He had only a few weeks before bought up the farm, lock, stock, and barrel, and come to settle here with his wife and two white piccanins. Now as he waited, switching the flies off his face and arms, he towered over Assam like a great tree, and Assam, whose eyes only half-focused in his fear, could see his forehead splattered by mud from the dip, his strong arms smeared with the Stockholm tar with which he had been treating the cattle's sores. Behind him, trapped in the narrow confine of the crush, Kapitan, the first of the trek-oxen, stood waiting patiently to be dipped.

Tanner said sharply to Assam: 'Where's the sixth ox—that black white-bellied animal?'

'Baas, he will not go through the dip.'

Tanner screwed up his eyes. As yet he had not completely grasped the ins and outs, the vagaries and hazards of this new business he had bought up. He had bought it hard, with all he possessed in the world, and there was no margin either for loss or for mistakes. His struggle for existence in this country had already left its marks on the youthfulness of his face. 'Won't go in the dip?' he snapped. 'What the hell d'you mean—won't go in the dip?'

'He will not go, baas. No master can make him go. He has never been dipped, baas.'

They stood watching one another, the white man's eyes feverish, irritable from the heat and the brittle dryness of the season, the eyes of the small half-caste dark, mysterious, fearful—yet oddly determined.

'You're the voorlooper, aren't you?' Tanner said at last. 'It's your job to bring along your team each week to be dipped. If that brute won't go through, he'll spread disease. He'll have to come along, the same as the others.'

The small boy repeated softly: 'Baas, Wittebellie will not go through the dip. No one can make him.'

'Oh yes they can,' Tanner said, swinging round. 'If you can't bring that ox along the other boys'll have to.' He put two fingers in his mouth and gave a shrill whistle, and the natives on the further side of the kraal came eagerly. 'See that black animal over there?' he said to them. 'I want him through the dip—same as the others.'

'Yes, baas.' 'Yes, master.' Glad to get one up on Assam, the Cape-coloured boy,

they stood eager, alert, an oddly-assorted group—the grizzled old herd-boy, patriarchal in his blue body-cloth, holding his tall gnarled stick, a lean youth with safety-pins for ear-rings, another wearing a silk stocking as a cap, the half-naked piccanins. The dust from the kraal covered their black bodies and woollen curls like a bloom.

'Get along, then,' Tanner said. 'Bring that animal here. There he is—behind the m'hobba hobba trees. There's a lot of red-water about this year and he'll damn well be dipped like the others.'

'All right, baas.' They ran off in a group, laughing, shouting at one another, flicking the little switches they had cut from the bush as they went across to the trees.

Assam watched them go. He watched them cross the flat bleached veldland, dodging the anthills which jutted up like teeth, he watched them until they had disappeared round the dark patch of bush.

AFTER a few moments the ugly black ox lumbered into sight, its hump a grotesque protuberance behind its uneven horns, its thin sinewy neck swinging mechanically like a child's toy. 'Oop, Wittebellie! Oop—ee-ee!' the boys shouted, and Assam could hear, even from where he was, the crack of their sticks falling on the beast's lean quarters, and could see the little puffs of dust rise on the still air. He stood very quiet beside the white man as he watched them, and then, when they drove the black ox closer, he could see its eyes. He felt almost that he could read its thoughts. He smiled then.

The voices came louder now, and the sound of hoofs trotting and the scampering of the natives' feet on the hard-baked ground were clear and crisp as the beat of drums. 'Oop—ee-ee, Wittebellie,' the boys kept shouting, and their sticks rained down on the ox's unfeeling hide.

Tanner still watched it all, a smile of satisfaction on his face. 'There you are,' he said, as they brought the ox up quietly to the gate of the kraal. 'It's just as I thought—that beast knows well enough when he's beat.'

The odd-looking beast went padding serenely past him towards the opening of the kraal and a native pulled out the heavy hewn pole and stood by for him to go in. Then suddenly something changed in the animal. A stiffening ran through the whole of his lean

body, an ugly, stubborn look came to his eye, something like a smouldering fire took the place of his usual meekness. The encircling natives were ready. Tensed for this moment, they closed in more tightly. You could hear the quick angry stamping of hoofs and a column of dust rose up from the centre of them. Then the ox swivelled. Its great uneven horns swung this way and that, level with the natives' stomachs. A wildness took it, a fierceness, a madness, and as it ran first at one, then at the other of them, one of its cunning eyes watched the entrance to the kraal.

The patient cattle there were instantly disturbed; they stampeded, butting one another with their sharp horns. The egrets rose swiftly upwards in flight and hung dazzlingly white against the molten steel of the sky. A pye-dog set up a hysterical yapping. The thunder of hoofs, excited high-pitched bellows, shouts from the natives, the cracks of sticks on the tough hides of the beasts filled the air—and the ox was away, away with its head plunging downward, its tail a triumphant pennant up on high until it dwindled from sight across the yellow expanse of veldland. Assam, standing by Tanner's side, said to him softly as he watched it: 'Master, no man can put Wittebellie through the dip. No baas has ever put Wittebellie through the dip.'

Tanner, momentarily put out, replied, a little gruffly: 'We'll get him later. The boys will get him later.' But he turned back to the crowded kraal, swiftly, like a man who does not care to admit defeat.

In the kraal the rest of the cattle, calm again at last, stirred gently. Prodded by the native herd-boy, they went one by one through the narrow opening of the crush. When Tanner had examined them, the pole was drawn out and, at the flick of a stick, obediently they leapt into the muddy water of the dip, swam patiently through it, then struggled out on to the opposite side. After shaking the stinking water off their hides, they trotted off placidly towards the grazing in the vlei. Assam, watching them, with a twist to his full lip, said to himself: 'They cannot make a fool of my Wittebellie,' and as he witnessed the absurd scene of a great African ox leaping, like the parody of a bathing-belle, into the water, he found himself smiling secretly, and his lips moved again, saying: 'Those boys will never catch you, my Wittebellie—not till morning, when I come for you.'

IN the morning when Assam went for Wittebellie he found him grazing quietly. There was beauty in the early hour. A clean wind blew over the veld grass making a vast sea of it, a tranquil golden sea, and the sky was a clear blue and the sunlight sparkled, and over the far hills which bordered the enormity of veld lay a veil of mist like the bloom on a grape.

Assam went singing as he fetched his six trek-oxen in from the vlei, the red Africans and the black Wittebellie, who now, all passion spent, walked sedately, though always a little apart from the others. Often he lingered behind to twist some forgotten tuft of grass around his long tongue, then, lowering his great heavy horns, he would break into an ungainly canter to catch up with the others, and as they went forward with their languid movements the dry grass sang like fiddle-strings against their legs and through the parted fingers of the boy. They crossed the dry bed of the spruit and, crushing the mint with their feet, the sharp, clean smell of it rose in the air.

Then they went down the trodden track to where the wagon stood under the gum-trees. Here, in the richly-perfumed air, Assam got busy inspanning his team, calling, first to one, then to the other, as he laid the yoke upon each neck: 'English-mann, Kapitan, Gentelmann, Wittebellie—Wittebellie, you skellum, where are you?' because there was always trouble in getting the yoke on Wittebellie. Whilst the other five oxen stood quietly on either side of the disselboom, Wittebellie would stray away to find some favourite grass, or rub his back against the bark of the gum-tree, or scratch the galls on his side against a wagon-wheel. 'Here, Wittebellie,' Assam would shout in his fierce child's voice, 'do what I say, you skellum, you!'

At last, with a cry of triumph, they were all inspanned, and the heavy wagon-wheels groaned as the straining team hauled the wagon into motion, and they went meandering in the yellow sunshine down the rough veld track which led to the farmstead, the five Africans walking sedately, swinging their wide horns, and with their eyes misted with apathy, the mongrel ox, as always, the least bit out of line.

As the team went downward past the native compound, the crowd of dusty black children stared at Assam with sullen, unfriendly eyes, and, because they embarrassed him, Assam

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pretended to be busy searching for wild gladioli in the long grass by the roadside, twisting the orange-coloured flowers into a wreath for Wittebellie's horn.

THE house where the Tanners lived stood a little apart from the farm-buildings, at a point where the flat land rose towards the foothills. Built of whitewashed mud-walls and with a thatched roof, it was as yet the embryo only of a big idea, the first achievement in a struggle which would need all the Tanners' resources. They had made what they could of the house, but, with their two small children, they lived the hard way. They had left no margin for failure, for waste or for mistakes. Having brought their own herd of twenty Afrianders, which they had built up over the last few years, there was not even enough margin to replace the skellum ox, which, with its small Cape-coloured voorlooper, they had taken over with the new farm. Life for the Tanners, now that the children had begun to arrive, was like walking a tight-rope. If you slipped up, if you took your eyes off your goal, if some vast disturbance shook your balance, you went falling from the heights into an abyss which was fearful to think about. Knowing this had made young Tanner tense, severe, at times too serious. But at this particular hour of morning the sight of his new farm awakening to life stirred him strangely. An uplifting joy seemed then to strengthen him for the struggle ahead. With this feeling in him, he watched from the doorway of the barn the field-boys trailing single file to the groundnut lands, the ancient herd-boy driving his red cows to the greener grass of the vlei, then, hearing the rumble of wheels, he turned and saw the little Cape-coloured boy bringing up the wagon.

Looking closely at the wagon, he said to himself: 'That black ox is a nuisance. It isn't pulling with the others. As soon as I can afford a decent Afriander I'll use the rascal for boys' meat.' Then, seeing the ridiculous wreath which dangled over the animal's horn, he was moved to smile—to shout cheerfully to Assam: 'It'll be wreaths all right if that skellum doesn't work better—and when I cut his throat you shall eat part of him, Assam!' He watched with enjoyment the bewilderment which spread over the small boy's face.

'Baas, he is a good ox, Wittebellie. I would not eat him,' piped Assam.

'He'd be good on a big dish—no good for work. He doesn't pull with the others.'

'He likes to work by himself, baas. Very strong ox. He can do all the ploughing on this farm alone.'

Tanner smiled. 'You want the team spirit on a farm,' he said, taking a delight in confusing the boy's simple mind.

They looked at one another, and suddenly both were serious, each, in his own way perhaps, being conscious at that moment of some shared beginning. 'Yes, baas,' said Assam at last, urging his team onward, and, with a great heaving and groaning, the wheels turned, and the six oxen made off slowly along the curling path away from the white man.

There was much to do on the farm, and it was many days before Tanner spoke with Assam again.

THE rain held off that year till late into the season. The veld grass grew dry as paper. The cattle strayed further and further in search of food, growing, as the weeks passed, gaunt and ugly, lowing pitifully. At night the scarlet and pink of fires glowed menacingly on the far horizons. And then there fell disaster. For Assam it was the biggest possible disaster. The black ox was sick.

Going down across the vlei to fetch him in the early morning, he found him lying in a strange abandoned attitude, breathing unnaturally, his nostrils alarmingly congested. Assam took him by the horns, urged him, prodded his heaving flanks with his own brown toes, tickled his belly with a stick. 'Oop, Wittebellie. Oo-oo.' He twisted his tail, gently first, then more sharply. 'Oo-oo, Wittebellie. If you are sick, they will kill you for boys' meat! Oo-oo, Wittebellie,' he implored. But the black ox lowed pitifully and turned his great brown eyes to ask for mercy, and suddenly Assam was frightened. In the shimmering heat and the intense silence, in the immensity of space which stretched everywhere around him, he felt small, powerless, and utterly abandoned—and gradually, in his fear, it seemed that the black ox was dying, and, if he died, he knew that something would go out of his own soul, some strength, some standard to live by, some essential part of his being. He stood motionless beside the ox, holding his fists clenched tightly, and wondered what to do. The yellow veldland stretched like a rolling sea, a dry

consuming heat shimmered on the surface of the grass, a bird made a long-drawn cry like a finger striking a taut wire. Then, looking in the distance, Assam saw the black scars from the veld fires, and the line of flames, creeping and predatory, along the border of the farmland, invisible, almost, but not quite, in the brilliance of the sunlight. He felt suddenly an urgency. Leaving Wittebellie, he hurried back along the winding track in the direction of the farmstead.

MR TANNER and his wife were breakfasting on the stoep of their small house when Assam came up to them, and the children ran laughing and shouting round the table. It was some moments before anyone noticed Assam, he stood so quietly. Then Tanner, looking over his shoulder, said sharply: 'You shouldn't come round to the house when we're having our skoff.'

Assam stood at attention, staring unflinchingly at the white man. 'I want muti, baas. Wittebellie is sick.'

Tanner laughed. 'I'll lend you my revolver—that's the best muti for that animal.'

With his wife, Tanner had been watching the veld fires also. He, too, felt something of the urgency which had disturbed Assam, for there was not sufficient labour on the farm to cut the necessary firebreaks. He had sown mealies and beans, and soon, if the drought persisted, these would wither in the ground, and there would be no food for man or beast. But he went on eating his breakfast, not looking at Assam.

'Baas, I want muti,' persisted the boy gently. A new doggedness seemed to have taken possession of him.

When the silence became acute, Alice Tanner said to her husband: 'Sandy, I'll get him something for that ox—a little brandy and milk, perhaps. It's worth trying.'

Alice Tanner was a thin, red-haired girl, with a kind mouth and wide-apart, timid eyes, and now she got up from the table and went to the store. 'There, Assam,' she said, when she handed him the bottles. 'Just pour all that down the ox's throat, then come back to-morrow and I'll give you some more.'

Assam curled his fingers round the bottles and tucked them under his arms. 'Thank you, n'kosikas,' he said.

They watched him turn, make off on his thin stick legs across the grass; they watched him

until he was no more than the veld itself, until distance consumed him.

'He's a nice little boy,' said Alice Tanner, 'and he loves that animal.'

Tanner replied, not unkindly: 'More than I do—it's waste of good brandy.' Then he grinned and went off to his work.

EACH day Assam called at the farmstead and Mrs Tanner gave him the muti for the ox, and each night, as she watched the veld fires flicker on the dark horizon, she thought of the awkward beast alone in the vlei, cut off most likely, if the fires spread, from a hope of escape. When the wind blew like a marauding army across the dry lands the flames would leap into brilliance and make a pink and menacing blur along the whole of the skyline. Sometimes it seemed each isolated fire joined hands and advanced to encircle her, and fear gripped her as she lay awake in bed, an unreasoning, animal fear. Often Sandy was out half the night working or cutting firebreaks, and when he came back he fell like a log on to the bed and was quickly sound asleep, so that it seemed she was always alone. Her loneliness tortured her. Even the sight of the small coloured boy waiting each day at the same time by the stoep became important, an odd solace. 'What is it, Assam?' she would ask for the comfort of speaking.

'Missis, I want muti for Wittebellie. He is a little better, but he cannot stand up.'

'All right, Assam. I'll fetch it for you.'

Watching him as he walked away with the two large bottles tucked under his arms, Alice would feel, in her renewed solitude, an utter loneliness. For some time she would be able to distinguish the boy's slight form against the dusk, then darkness would devour him for a time. Later, when he had nearly reached the vlei, there would sometimes be a vivid glimpse of his silhouette against the firelight.

The fires began to work upon Alice. Each day when Sandy came back from the lands she would speak of them, and each time he would answer shortly: 'You're safe enough near the house—it's the farm I'm worrying about.'

'But the black ox—he's in the centre of it.'

'Oh, damn the black ox. I'll put a bullet through his brain!'

THEN one morning there was no more waiting. Alice knew it as she awoke and

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smelled the new, unfamiliar smell, heard new sounds—high-pitched bewildered lowings, the tramp of hoofs crushing down the dry grass around the house, and just behind it all, too close, the insidious crackling and sizzling and spluttering, like fat boiling in a great pan. She sprang out of bed and woke the two children, hurrying them into their clothes, bundling them into the small push-chair on the stoep.

The clearing around the house was filled with cattle from the vlei, great wide-apart horns swung all around her like a forest, mournful unhappy eyes stared at her questioningly, whilst the wet black muzzles searched for the dry, unpalatable grass. A hare, bedraggled and no longer fearful of her, ran past her feet, a monkey scampered close to the wheels of the pram and made off through the narrow track away from the fire, and from somewhere in the wall of smoke she could hear the hoarse shouts of the native labourers beating out the flames, the crack of their sticks falling on the baked ground. The two children, aware of the commotion and the danger, began to wail, the elder child throwing itself face downwards in the pram in a paroxysm of terror. Alice stood for a moment not knowing what to do. There was no sign of Sandy, and the natives running to and fro in front of the flames, treading the red-hot earth with their bare feet, were too busy to be disturbed. Then suddenly, just in front of her, calm, determined, patient, and respectful as ever—Assam. 'Oh, Assam,' she cried in her relief, 'you've come to help me! You're a good boy. Can you show me the path away from the fire?'

He stood, not moving for a moment, just watching her.

'Well, Assam, which way do we go?' Already she could feel the heat of the fire, her eyes were sore from the smoke.

Still the small boy hesitated. 'Missis,' he said at last, 'I want muti for Wittebellie. He is a little stronger. But I cannot move him from the vlei.'

Alice narrowed her eyes. An overpowering feeling of disappointment swept in on her, destroying her. She saw the small boy only through a mist, a mist of fear and disillusionment. 'What does that ox matter!' she cried. 'It's the children—the piccanin baas and missis. You must help them, Assam.'

But Assam stood unmoved. 'I want muti, missis, for the black ox.'

'Oh, bother the black ox!' she cried, tears

springing up, blinding her. She swung round away from him, pushing the pram over the hard bumpy ground, seeing nothing in her terror but the narrow path which coiled away from the fires, hearing only the agonised wailing of the child in the pram—and at last, coming towards her along the path, there was Sandy. Blackened and scorched by the flames, he had fought his way from the worst of the fires which had cut him off and come to help her.

Suddenly seeing him, something like a floodgate seemed to burst in Alice. She let him take her in his arms, abandoning herself, her safety, and her children with utter relief to him, and looking back, with him beside her, along the path she had come, she saw that she had actually left the flames behind her. And she saw, too, with a feeling of shame at her own panic, the farmhouse still standing in its little island of shorn grass, the red cattle clustered together for safety, whilst the flames, a part of their fury already spent, licked the last of the long grasses in a circle round the clearing.

'WELL,' said Tanner bitterly, 'so we've arrived just here, after the months of struggle and work.' He stood with his wife on the stoep whilst the children slept in the cool of the house. It was early morning, but there was no beauty now. The wind blew over a black charred world, a desert of blackness interrupted here and there by a stripped tree or a bleached anthill. 'It seems,' he said wearily, 'this time we really are beat!'

Alice looked ahead with him for some sign of hope, some mark, some promise, even if it were no bigger than a man's hand in the benign sky. But she saw none. So she said, to fill the silence: 'When things grow again, it will be a new start.'

'How?'

'We can sow mealies, beans . . .'

He laughed shortly. 'And how do we plough, harrow, fertilise? With my bare hands?' He looked ruefully at his hands which were badly scorched from the fire, then he looked further towards where, quite close to the native compound, the hides of the trek-oxen swung drying in the sun. She saw them too—an eloquent expression, it seemed, at that moment of their utter defeat.

And yet, as the weeks slid by, and the determined grass, emerald green at first

against the black of their encircling world, showed more and more vivid each day, hope would grow up in her. When the m'sasa trees were suddenly a scarlet mistiness around the house, and the rains fell refreshingly on the thatched roof, and the flowers grew up and budded in the garden, she felt lifted up out of their material defeat. 'I can't help it, Sandy,' she said, when Tanner came back from the town after an abortive attempt to borrow money for the farm. 'It's what I feel—some instinctive feeling.'

He shrugged. Yet when he looked at the new grass, which already had all but obliterated the ravages of the fires, he thought he understood. 'We could begin again,' he said, 'if we had something to work with—one beast to pull the plough.'

Often in the evening they went down the path towards the river-bed. The rains had filled the river now and water ran over the polished boulders. On either bank the grass had grown long, and here and there, amongst the green of it, could be seen the orange of the wild gladioli.

Suddenly, on one of these walks, Alice

stopped, put a finger to her lips. 'Listen, Sandy,' she said. 'Do you hear the wind? It's like music—like someone singing!'

He stood and listened, transported in spite of himself by the newborn beauty of the morning. 'It's the river,' he said after a moment.

She shook her head. 'No—it's somebody singing.' Then all at once she knew. The whole of herself trembled with the joy of the discovery, with the swift uprising of this new hope which had grown up within her of late. 'Look, Sandy!' she cried out. 'Just look!'

There, moving towards them through the long grass, lifting his shrill voice in a song which rose higher than the music of the water, came the small coloured boy—Assam, leading in triumph beside him the ugly black ox, which seemed for some odd reason transfigured into a symbolic creation. For it walked no longer with its strange uneven gait, but with sedate, determined step, and its crooked horns were festooned with all the flowers of the veld, like a spring feast—or like the promise of a new beginning.

March First Story : *Death of a Motive* by Andrew Paton.

Winter Night Scene

*Ghostly glowing light
Streaming through the branches,
Black silver tracery
Against a new half-crown;
Faintly moaning wind
Whispering round the branches,
Stirring softly, slightly,
Haunting next year's green;
Noiseless moving shapes
Faintly flitting somewhere,
Gently, smoothly, moving,
Secretive and silent.
Distant glowing squares,
Lights from living houses,
Shadows falling darkly
Over cold green lawns.
To-morrow will be different,
Night will be forgotten,
All will be forgotten
In the living day.*

JANE ELLWOOD.

Dating Archæological Discoveries

H. J. HINE, B.Sc.

IN archæological excavation the greatest problem in extracting a useful record from the discovery of an antiquity is the difficulty involved in giving it an accurate date. A rough rule that the lower an antiquity is buried the older it is, is basically true, but the rate of covering is uneven. Soil accumulates in different ways, and the accumulation can be caused by the slow growth of vegetation, by alluvial deposit from the overflow of streams and rivers, or it may be made up of falls of rocks and stones from surrounding heights, or it may be caused by human agency. Examples of the various ways in which soil accumulates are to be found at Sardis, the ancient capital of Lydia, in Asia Minor, which was silted up by river-sand brought by flood; at Delphi, which was covered with rocks fallen from an overhanging cliff; and at the Acropolis of Athens, in which the continual terracing of slopes and the use of earlier remains as filling at later periods kept the antiquities well under the ground.

Many mounds of the Bronze Age and Stone Age were built up by the repeated collapse of mud-brick houses and by the retention of household rubbish. The tells of Jordan and Israel are mounds made up in this way. The first towns were no doubt built on slightly high ground, for defence purposes and for drainage reasons, and gradually the mound grew in height. In early times the bricks of which the houses were built were made of local mud, which was sun-baked, not treated in a heated kiln. The houses lasted for about twenty-five years and then began to crumble. Repair was not worth while, because all the bricks in the building deteriorated at about the same time. Therefore the inhabitants knocked down the remaining walls and used the rubble as foundation for a new building. This circumstance makes it possible for relative dating to be very accurate, and excavation

can be done cleanly and definitely, because the strata are in compact layers.

One such tell, the Beth-shan of the Old Testament, had been in continuous occupation from the time of the earliest Egyptian conquerors up to Byzantine times. The later strata are the remains of substantial stone buildings. In the era of its sun-baked-brick buildings the Philistines took possession of Beth-shan soon after the death of Rameses III in 1167 B.C. About 1020 B.C. they defeated the Israelites on Mount Gilboa, and it is stated in the First Book of Samuel that the Philistines took the body of Saul to Beth-shan and placed his armour in the House of Ashtaroth. Excavation indicates that a temple of Ashtaroth and a temple of Dagon, both built in the reign of Rameses II, were still in use in the time of the Philistines, when, according to the Old Testament account, a god and goddess were still being worshipped at Beth-shan. In the temple of Ashtaroth was found a tablet in which the goddess was referred to as 'the queen of Heaven, mistress of all the gods.' She was undoubtedly the goddess referred to in Jeremiah: 'But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her.'

In the level representing the time of Pharaoh Seti I, 1313 B.C. to 1225 B.C., there was another temple, and in it a gold figure of a goddess, a cylindrical sacred flower-stand, and a baking-tray, probably used for baking the cakes offered to Ashtaroth. There were also some clay balls, and on these was stamped with a seal the hieroglyph '*imenyt*,' which meant 'daily offering.' The seal indicated that the balls represented cakes and that they were votive offerings for providing a daily supply of bread to the deity. That usage has a possible analogy with the practice of preparing

DATING ARCHÆOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES

shewbread at the sanctuary of Nob, as recorded in the First Book of Samuel, and throws light on the problem of the periodicity of renewing the bread. At all levels evidence of date from the nature of the objects found supplemented evidence of date by depth. In this connection it is worth noticing that the value of items of circumstantial evidence increases in geometrical progression, not arithmetical progression. Two pieces of evidence bearing on the same point are more than twice as valuable as one piece.

Disastrous fires sometimes raise the level of cities. Burnt houses are pulled down and the rubbish derived from them is levelled to make a new floor. The Forum at Rome was buried to twenty or thirty feet by fire and demolition, and by the growth of vegetation.

WHERE human agencies have been at work, the rate of deposit is high. Where natural agencies have been at work, the rate is slow and the deposit slight, except in the case of extreme floods. In damp climates vegetation decays quickly, and some Roman sites in Britain which were not reoccupied after the Roman period are covered with several feet of heavy soil. This difference between the rates of work of natural and human agencies is seen very clearly in Greek prehistoric sites, where often there are only two or three feet of upper natural deposit, and where the layers due to human agency reach to fifty feet and cover a period no longer than that in which the thin natural layer was deposited.

Strata are deposited horizontally by gravity, and therefore the excavator must uncover them horizontally. Digging must begin on the highest surface of the top stratum and the strata must be uncovered layer by layer until virgin soil is reached. Even the sinking of pits from the top of a site in the preliminary trials which precede an investigation is dangerous. The only reliable method is to open up an extensive area and keep the depth of digging constant.

Strata can usually be distinguished from one another only by a change in the composition of the soil or by a change in the character of the objects found. Every object made by man, and all intrusive natural objects as well, must be noted and classified in order that the change from one stratum to another shall be noticed. For example, destruction by fire may be indicated by a sudden black layer, or

a thick deposit of stones or clay may indicate a collapse or demolition of houses. A stratum with no finds in it may indicate that the site was temporarily abandoned as a human habitation.

Since the position in depth of the objects found in the strata is a guide to their position in time, it is possible to trace the development of types of articles: the prototypes will be at the lower levels, and the developed versions will be in the upper levels.

There is always the possibility of freak types, but stratigraphical evidence can be taken to be generally reliable as far as relative age is concerned. Tombs and graves, however, bring peculiar problems, for there is no regular deposit in order of time, and though a tomb is made at one fixed time it may be re-used or opened or robbed at a later date. All the same, tombs and graves are extremely productive of objects important to archaeology, and great efforts have to be made to fix the dates. The archaeologist looks first for contacts with other regions. For example, an Egyptian object in an otherwise undatable Minoan tomb may give the date when that tomb was made, or Roman potsherds in an otherwise unidentified British site may prove that the inhabitants were in touch with Roman culture when the burial was made or when the individual was alive.

VERY often, however, some absolute method of fixing dates is required, a method independent of any other evidence. In fixing the approximate date of very ancient tombs and other human remains measurements of radioactivity from carbon are useful; and for dating the age of geological formations the stage of disintegration of uranium minerals into lead and helium can be measured. The use of the latter method has indicated that the chalk of the Chiltern Hills was deposited 80,000,000 years ago, and the carbon method has indicated that the cloth in which the Dead Sea scrolls, found in Ain Fashka Cave in the valley of the Jordan, was made at some time between 160 B.C. and A.D. 240. These methods depend on the fact that the rate of change or disintegration of the substance continues constant year after year.

For that part of archaeology which deals with the history of man the carbon method of dating is the more applicable. Carbon is present in very many of the antiquities likely

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to need dating, and it is an element which exists in more than one form. The atomic weight of ordinary carbon is 12, but both Carbon 12 and a carbon having an atomic weight of 14 enter into the formation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The heavier carbon, Carbon 14, is radioactive. Plants feed upon carbon dioxide and build up their tissues with it, so that Carbon 14 enters into vegetable matter in the same proportion as that in which it is present in the atmosphere. Since all animals feed on vegetation or on other animals which have eaten vegetation, all living organic matter contains the same proportion of Carbon 14 compared with Carbon 12 as is found in atmospheric carbon dioxide.

Carbon 14 emits electrons, and the atoms concerned revert to the nitrogen atoms from which the carbon was formed by cosmic rays. If we know how quickly this disintegration of Carbon 14 proceeds, we can calculate the date at which the material was alive. It seems pretty certain that when about 5700 years have elapsed one-half of any given quantity of Carbon 14 is left, and this figure is called the half-life period of Carbon 14. Compared with this half-life period, the lifetime of an individual plant or animal is so short that it has no effect on the quantity of Carbon 14 present. When the organism dies no further Carbon 14 is added to its substance and it begins to lose it. After 5700 years the ratio of radioactive to ordinary carbon drops to one-half of the value it had when the material was alive; three-quarters of the Carbon 14 will be gone in 11,400 years; seven-eighths of it will be gone in 17,100 years.

The dating of archaeological finds by means of Carbon 14 methods calls for accurate means of measuring the amounts of radioactive carbon and of ordinary carbon present in the specimen and comparing the ratio obtained with the ratio in ordinary air, or in live organic matter. To test the accuracy, the radio-carbon method has been used on antiquities of which the age could be checked by other kinds of evidence. A piece of wood from an Egyptian coffin of the Ptolemaic period was known from historic evidence to be 2280 years old, and a radio-carbon determination gave it a date of between 1740 and 2640 years. Other checks have given the same order of accuracy, and, although the method can never be used for determinations in which fine limits are essential, it is accurate enough to be extremely useful in archaeology.

THE radio-carbon method can be used in determining the age of bones, provided they are not more than 25,000 years old, but the method uses up several ounces of bones and spoils the specimen. There is nothing in the composition of older bones which enables their age to be estimated absolutely, and even relative dating of them may be difficult, especially in fossil bones in deposits belonging to the period of the Great Ice Age. In some cases an examination called the fluorine test is useful. Fluorine, in the form of fluorides, occurs in many common natural materials. In particular, it is present as a trace in most natural water. When fluorine comes into contact with the mineral matter of bones it enters the ultramicroscopic spaces between the crystals of calcium phosphate and is trapped in them. If a bone lies in moist gravel or sand it gradually absorbs fluorine, which enters the bone substance and is not released unless the whole bone is dissolved. The quantity of fluorine enclosed in the spaces of the bone increases as time goes on, and this fact gives a means of distinguishing between fossilised bones of different ages if the bones are lying close together on a site, though the method cannot be used to date a bone relative to fossil remains found some distance away. A bone buried in gravels where the water contains much fluorine will absorb the fluorine more rapidly than a bone buried in gravels where there is less fluorine.

The fluorine method was used on the fossil bones which were attributed to Piltdown Man. These bones were found with parts of fossil animals in gravel, and the water which laid this gravel had swept together several lots of bones and teeth of various degrees of antiquity. The deposit contains some fossil bones of beaver and deer which are unlikely to be any older than the settled gravel, but it contains also the teeth of the extinct elephant mastodon and these must date from the beginning of the Great Ice Age, and must have been fossilised before they became embedded in the deposit. All the bones are stained by iron oxides and look all the same colour, and at first it was not certain whether the head bones and teeth of Piltdown Man belonged with the Great Ice Age bones or not, and that is why the fluorine test was used. To obtain samples of the bones a fine dental drill was used on them with great care until enough material had been bored out. The result of estimations of the fluorine content of each sample showed that all the animal

remains which dated from the Great Ice Age had a high fluorine content, while all the remains attributed to Piltdown Man contained little fluorine, and this was taken to indicate that Piltdown Man was of much later date than the mastodon with which it was found associated.

IN dating more recent finds, and tracing their relation to finds from other sites, ordinary chemical analysis is often used, and can sometimes fix the date of happenings only indirectly related to the object analysed. It can be particularly helpful in providing evidence about the sources of supply tapped in the making of articles such as weapons and coins

from mixtures and compounds. It has been found, for example, that Greek bronze coins varied widely in their tin content. When no more tin came from the mines of Cornwall Greek coins were debased to a much lower content of tin. Rome, however, must have maintained the proportion of gold in its coins over a long period, for analysis of a series of Roman coins from the 4th century B.C. to A.D. 450 has shown that the composition changed very little.

In these and many other ways the dating of archaeological discoveries is becoming an exact science. Guesswork and estimates made by the excavator from his experience are being replaced or confirmed by the use of modern measuring instruments.

Dormant Money

GUY W. KEELING

MONIES lying dormant in this country were investigated by a House of Commons select committee that issued a special report on the Dormant Bank Balances and Unclaimed Securities Bill (1919), but no legislation resulted. The matter came up again in the historic debate that took place in the House of Lords on Charitable Trusts (1949), as a result of which there was set up a committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Nathan, 'to consider and report on the changes in the law and practice relating to Charitable Trusts in England and Wales, which would be necessary to enable the maximum benefit to the community to be derived from them.' After sitting for three years, the committee published a most interesting and informative Report (Cmd. 8710), whose recommendations were debated in the House of Lords on the initiative of Lord Samuel on 22nd July 1953.

At the time this committee's terms of reference were determined, the then Government

purposely excluded detailed consideration of dormant monies, holding that these would be best dealt with separately. The committee, however, included in its recommendations one advising that dormant funds should be mobilised, and devoted to constructive social ends, saying: 'There is room for local "Common Good Trusts," whose function it would be to stimulate pioneer efforts and new experiments in charitable work. These trusts might also attract small bequests, which might otherwise establish separate trusts of uneconomical size. Local Common Good Trusts should be spontaneous and unofficial in character . . . There is also room for National Common Good Trusts, for England and Wales, having much the same purpose, but operating at a national level. They should be set up by Statute and their trustees should be appointed by the Queen in Council. They should have a substantial annual income. Towards this the Government should make

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available an initial sum, and *bona vacantia* estimated to yield something over £100,000 a year.'

These *bona vacantia*, or unclaimed monies, arise from sources such as intestacies; dissolved corporations and approved societies; and treasure-trove. These windfalls are used by our Chancellors of the Exchequer towards reduction of the National Debt. In Sweden, however, there was established, in 1928, a Public Inheritance Fund, into which are paid, regularly, monies arising by way of intestacies, which are then used for constructive social purposes. Up to 1952, inclusive, the total paid in was about 33 million kronor, of which some 22 million had been used as follows:

Children's Homes . . .	3.9 million kronor		
Day-Nurseries and Kindergarten . . .	5.5	"	"
Holiday-Camps . . .	6.3	"	"
Youth Work . . .	4.0	"	"
Helping large families . . .	5	"	"
Grants to young people for study and vocational training . . .	1.6	"	"

The Swedish Institute for Cultural Relations (49 Egerton Crescent, London, S.W.3) has available, on loan, a 16 mm. film that portrays the activities financed by these monies.

Lord Samuel, in the House of Lords debate, said it was estimated that unclaimed funds in Chancery amounted to about £3 million and dormant deposits in the banks—the Bank of England, Savings Banks (Post Office and Trustee), and Joint-Stock Banks—to at least £20 million. He urged that there could be no moral objection to all these monies being put to some good purpose, instead of, as now, being, for all effective purposes, wasted. Lord Nathan, later in the debate, remarked: 'We should activate these dormant balances; and the scope is wide. A great statesman of the past said that the best place for money was in the pockets of the people, where it should be left to fructify. It will never fructify as a dormant balance, but it might well fructify in the expansion and support of those social services which do not lend themselves to support from public funds.'

It is interesting to note how varied are the reasons for monies becoming dormant. They are, perhaps, best indicated by practical examples, such as the following:

(i) Unclaimed monies in the form of dividends at the Bank of England have, in the past, averaged more than £½ million a year; if not claimed within 5 years, they have been transferred to the National Debt Commissioners.

(ii) Back in the 18th century, when speculation in shares was considered a sin, it was common practice to invest under assumed names.

(iii) A Lancashire woman left a sum of £200 untouched in her bank for thirty years because she had lost her bank-book and, as she imagined, the money with it.

(iv) There is said to be a sum of £15 million held by solicitors and trustees, awaiting claimants.

(v) At the end of the Second World War the Air Ministry had in hand £6000, the property of deceased airmen, composed of amounts varying from a few shillings to £200. The War Office had £12,000, derived from banking-accounts and back-pay of 350 men whose relatives could not be traced.

(vi) It was reported, in 1946, that an unclaimed sum of £6600 had been received by the Treasury, through the Probate Court, from estates varying in value from £40 to £1200.

(vii) In the Post Office Savings Bank some of the cards in the dormant index go back as far as 1861. They represent, in the aggregate, many thousands of pounds. Many of these accounts became dormant at a period when there was extensive emigration to Canada.

(viii) At the Bank of England, whenever Conversion Loans have occurred, a number of stockholders have been untraceable. For instance, in 1887, when Mr Goschen's Conversion and Redemption Scheme was being carried through, of the owners of three per cents (representing £565 million) there were 10,900 that could not be found. More than forty holdings, each exceeding £10,000, were not claimed; one such holding was for £187,593.

(ix) The Bank of England, when distributing dividends, takes no account of fractions of a penny, with the result that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, some time ago, received a nest-egg of no less than £151,930.

(x) The Public Trustee Office had, recently, lying dormant, a sum of £18,500.

(xi) Unclaimed dividends, amounting to large sums, are to be found not only amongst recorded holders of Government and other stocks, but also business houses.

DORMANT MONEY

OVERSEAS examples are seen in the Office of the Public Trustee of New South Wales, which, in 1936, paid into the Treasury the sum of £19,399, only £1267 of which was subsequently claimed. The Commonwealth Bank of Australia had in its keeping £11,000 for which there were no claimants. During the recent war unclaimed monies in the Treasury of the Union of South Africa were reported to amount to £4½ million. The Spanish Savings Bank in Madrid has held, unclaimed, a sum amounting to £34,000.

In the U.S.A., amongst reasons given for accounts becoming dormant may be mentioned one that was much in evidence after the financial crashes of the early 1930's. It was that, on a bank failing, many clients took it for granted that all their money was lost, although, in fact, part, and sometimes all, could be recovered. In the case of two such banks in Detroit, where three million dollars remained unclaimed, the receivers announced that 50,000 small depositors had failed to realise that they were entitled to 100 per cent repayment and that many large depositors were unaware that they were entitled to 68 per cent. Again, American banks situated in financial centres had amongst their clients small banks which sometimes disappeared. One trust company included in a list of depositors not heard of for fifteen years a dozen or more banks that had long before failed; the receivers had overlooked these assets. Another trust company reported dormant accounts in the names of American cities—namely, Columbus and Toledo (Ohio) and Syracuse (New York). Yet another reason was that banks near wartime training-camps carried numerous small accounts opened by soldiers who disappeared completely. One bank had on its books the names of thirty men who had served in the Civil and in the Spanish-American wars.

In spite of strenuous efforts made by some of the American banks, not more than 20 per cent of missing depositors are traced. In more than half the States no attempt is made to trace them. Sixteen States have laws providing that dormant accounts must be advertised in local papers and that monies that remain unclaimed over periods ranging from 5 to 30 years shall be taken over by the State. In Vermont, unclaimed money goes to the General School Fund; in North Carolina, after five years have elapsed, to the University

of North Carolina, though the owner can still claim for a further ten years.

In 1934, unclaimed monies in American national banks—representing about half the bank deposits in the U.S.A.—were reported to amount to 132 million dollars. Three years later, New York City banks were advertising the names of 56,000 depositors whose addresses were unknown. A Quebec bank, with a dormant account of £550 to the credit of Harry P. Stone, discovered, eventually, that he had been shot in 1925, while holding up a bank.

The India Office has advertised unclaimed monies totalling £10,000.

Dormant funds in the High Court of Eire were recently given as totalling £540,000.

And so the story proceeds. In the 18th century, John Bushnell, the sculptor, whose portrait is to be found on the Albert Memorial, died, leaving £100,000. The money was never claimed. Who would have thought of Tattersall's, after a sale of horses some years ago, having on hand, unclaimed, a sum of £13,000?

That it is as well to open one's letters is seen by the following cautionary tale. An American oil-magnate died leaving 10 million dollars to his mother, who was living in France. The executors wrote informing her of her inheritance. Following a family quarrel, however, she had vowed never again to open a letter received from America. Many years later the letter was opened by her great-grand-daughter, by which time the bequest had swollen, at compound interest, to 27 million dollars. The claim could not be sustained, owing to the Statute of Limitations.

It is greatly to be hoped that the Government will proceed, without delay, to enable our dormant monies to be mobilised and made available for useful social and educational purposes. Common Good Funds, which the Nathan Committee recommends should be set up to receive such monies, have long existed in Scotland, where they function in 160 Burghs. A close parallel to these funds that are proposed for England and Wales is seen in the American Community Trusts that are operating in some 75 cities and in a few counties; several of them are state-wide. The total resources of these Community Trusts were estimated, some years ago, to amount to 67 million dollars.



Proposal

THOMAS KELLY

WELL, of all the spiteful slanders! As if I, of all people, would *dream* of such a thing. I'm glad to say—and that's more than some people I know can claim—that I've never forgotten my dignity.

Why, I've simply lost count of the number of proposals I *refused*. Well, perhaps declined is a kinder way of putting it. Better still, headed off. Yes, I think I made quite an art of heading off the impulsive young men who wished to lay their susceptible hearts at my feet.

All right, *all right*, I'll tell you about the proposal I did accept. I need hardly say that Claud and I are happily married. *Most* happily. Of course, he is a little *unreasonable* at times. But then, what husband isn't? Oh, it's merely that Claud prefers reading dry old papers and pamphlets to doing little household chores. Not that I really mind. After all, a husband is only a man, and very often a hindrance rather than a help in the kitchen.

Naturally, Claud has joined the golf club. I'd have joined too, only he told me there's a long waiting-list. And when he mentioned that ladies aren't allowed to play at weekends, except in big competitions or something like that—well, I ask you! Still, I'll admit I *was* disappointed. There's such an

air of leisure about golf, especially when the players stroll so placidly from one bunker—if that's what they call it—to the next.

What's that? Claud is *exactly* nine years older than I am. Precisely the right difference, on the right side. Not like your wonderful friend, Mabel Snodgrass, who married a boy ten years younger than herself. I really had to agree with one of her most intimate friends who said, at the time, that the law as to kidnapping needed tightening up.

WHERE did we first meet? Now, let me think. Was it at a party? Yes, it was. But I used to go to so many parties that I've forgotten—no, I haven't. It was at a party thrown by the Cyril Hamblins. You'll have heard of them, of course. Cyril was—still is, as a matter of fact—headmaster of that big school near London. And Claud was one of his most brilliant assistants, specialising in history and dry stuff like that. Anybody would have picked him out as a specialist. He always looked so intellectual and—er—preoccupied.

Well, you know how it is at a big party. The name always fails to register when you're introduced. Even when it doesn't, you've

PROPOSAL

probably forgotten it next time you meet. Actually, I'd *completely* forgotten Claud's name—that is, if we were introduced.

However, after a while the people to whom I'd been talking were hailed by some friends, and at the same moment Cyril Hamblin was called to the phone. He'd been chatting to Claud, over a cup of coffee, and the poor lamb—I mean Claud, of course—looked so lost by himself that I decided to console him. So I drifted across, and took the chair our host had just deserted.

Naturally, I had to admit that I was afraid I hadn't caught his name when we were introduced in the crush, and he said he hadn't caught mine either. So I told him, and asked his name. He said 'Ellerton,' without mentioning a Christian name. I liked that about him, for a start. Not forward, like many confident youths who expect to be on Christian name terms right from the moment they're introduced.

It turned out that Claud was expecting a phone call, too, showing how full of interest his life was. But, as no message came, he said he'd stroll out to the hall and get through himself. Before he could do even that, he saw someone he wanted to see specially, and went across to him. So I waited until he'd finished his chat, and *long* before the end of the evening we were chatting as if we'd known each other for years.

But although he said he *could* run me home—I mean to the boarding-house where I was then staying—he'd forgotten that he'd already promised lifts to three people, and his car held only four comfortably. Not, indeed, that I'd any trouble getting a lift from somebody else.

I didn't have a real chance to say good-bye to Claud—you know what a crush these end-of-term parties are? But I got his address from Mrs Hamblin—a dear old friend of mine—and called next day to apologise for my abrupt departure.

CLAUD'S rooms weren't what you'd call terrible comfy, but his landlady was such a dear, motherly soul. She invited me to have a cup of tea in the kitchen, a sort of semi-basement place, but as cosy as a boudoir. We had quite a chat. It was obvious that she wanted to impress me with the importance of her star boarder. She kept reverting to the fact that Mr Ellerton's people were big manu-

facturers. She called him *terribly* reserved, but such a gentleman, and mentioned that she expected him back any moment. When the front-door opened, and we heard footsteps in the hall, she said: 'There's Mr Ellerton now.'

So she hurried up to tell him I was there, but, after talking in whispers to whoever it was, she came down to say it wasn't Mr Ellerton after all. I remember I was *frightfully* disappointed when she told me he was off next day for a motoring holiday.

HOWEVER, quite early in the following term, I met him again. His landlady had mentioned casually that, in term-time, he always lunched at the one restaurant. Curiously enough, it turned out to be a place I liked specially. The waitress told me that his usual table was next the one I always preferred. So, naturally, I used to sit at his table, whenever there was room. For, even then, I could tell that we were going to be more than casual friends—once the little barrier of his shyness had been removed. Indeed, I sensed that I mustn't let my foolish pride stand in the way of our growing friendship.

To mention one thing, I'd discovered, first time we met, that Claud was as keen on the theatre as I was, although *he* favoured historical plays. As it happened, they were doing a very good drama in one of the try-out theatres, so I told him about it. It turned out that he *had* read the press critiques, and intended seeing the play later in the week. He had a shock when I told him that the theatre was absolutely booked out for the short run. Luckily enough, I was also able to mention that my uncle had intended taking me, but found that he couldn't get to town, so he'd sent me the tickets. There was the obvious solution to Claud's problem.

It was rather amusing, really, because he tried to insist on paying for the two tickets. But I told him that my uncle would be *frightfully* annoyed if I agreed. The outing was to be *my* little treat. I must say Claud enjoyed the play immensely. It was set in his special period, and nearly as good as the critics said.

DURING that term we saw quite a lot of each other. To be perfectly candid,

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his rooms *were* a little drab. So I tried to brighten them up, by taking along flowers, and so forth. Also, I used to tell his landlady of certain little dishes that Mr Ellerton was fond of. Though I discovered too often from Claud that Mrs Jones usually forgot my suggestions.

However, *long* before the end of term, I *knew* that Claud had something on his mind. He had sort of withdrawn into himself. Sometimes he even forgot our appointments. I got into the way of reminding him, teasing him playfully about qualifying for the absent-minded professor rôle.

Then a rather surprising thing happened. Claud failed to appear at the headmaster's end-of-school-year garden-party. Mrs Cyril Hamblin enlightened me. 'Haven't you heard, my dear?' she asked. 'Claud is leaving. *Has* left, to be correct. He's going to that big school near Birmingham. Cyril is *terribly* disappointed.'

'Oh,' I said. 'Is Claud being promoted?'

'That's the mystery of it, my dear,' she told me. 'He isn't. The school has hardly the standing of ours, and Birmingham is not a health-resort. Claud asked to be excused from the party, as he's leaving town to-night.'

I need hardly say how *frightfully* surprised I was, for Claud had never mentioned to me that he'd applied for a change. But, of course, I guessed the reason. His pride. He didn't tell me, in case he wasn't appointed. Though I did worry at first, for fear it meant that his absent-mindedness—to which I used to refer so lightly—was developing.

Now, I don't know whether you believe in the hand of Fate, or anything like that, but here's what happened next. At the time concerned I was teaching in a big London Council School. Well, each week I got the teachers' journal, of course. And the morning after Claud left I found myself glancing down the section of the advertisement pages headed: 'Vacancies.' And what was the first notice to catch my eye? A suitable vacancy in a Birmingham Council School. So it looked as if I'd been *guided* to that announcement. I applied right away, was called for interview, and got the job. My old managers released me, without the *slightest* fuss. So that was that.

As if it all had been part of a plan, the new term wasn't very old before I ran into Claud one afternoon as he left school. Such a surprise for him. For a full half-minute he

just stood and blinked at me before saying: 'Oh.' I told him I was simply delighted with my new place. Such an improvement on London, which I never did like. He said his change had been congenial, so far.

CLAUD was then living in a service-flat—such an impersonal sort of place. If he wasn't in, he simply wasn't in. There was no place I could wait, and nobody to talk to except a rather precocious page-boy. Claud seemed much busier, too. He told me he had *huge* piles of exercises to correct every evening.

To be candid, I was *almost* beginning to regret the good old days in London, when I heard the startling news. For weeks I'd been noticing that Claud wasn't looking at all well. But then, who can look well without a scrap of home life?

I remember, too, it was a Friday evening. I happened to be passing the block of flats, and on the off-chance of Claud being in I called. My page-boy friend told me that Mr Ellerton had barely time to pack a few things that afternoon before being rushed off to a big private hospital.

Then, for more than an hour, it seemed as if *everybody* was in a conspiracy to keep me in the dark. Nobody could tell me *anything*. But at last I discovered that the operation wasn't to be until the next morning. Saturday, my free day.

So I thought how *lovely* it would be for Claud if I could be there when he came out of the anæsthetic. But that matron was a martinet, if ever I met one. Simply wouldn't allow me to wait anywhere, not even in the corridor. So all I could do was phone, and keep on phoning, until at last I heard the operation was successfully over.

I simply could *not* wait for the usual visiting hours. And, for once, my luck was in. I found a probationer nurse—such a charming girl—who allowed me upstairs. I crept into the room, and was simply *horrified* to see poor Claud looking so haggard. He was asleep. His head sagged into the pillow, his arm flung carelessly across the coverlet. Oh dear, I thought, so this is *professional* nursing? Give me the home variety.

I kept as quiet as a mouse until he stirred and blinked. Then I smoothed his pillow, straightened the quilt, and made him really comfortable. When he was fully awake, I

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smiled down at him and whispered: 'Oh, my darling, you'll *never* be well, until you have somebody to care for you all the time.'

Such a patient smile he gave me then. As I soothed his forehead I bent down to catch his words: 'Wouldn't that mean getting married?' he asked.

'Yes, it would, my sweet,' I reassured him. 'But before *that* can happen you'll have to hurry up and get well.'

Wouldn't you call ours an unusual engagement? But that's only one of the many things I like about Claud. He's *always* saying something original.

Windmill Land of To-morrow

Electricity from Wind-power in Scotland

JOHN NEWELL

IT was on a blustery, wet November day that I saw the strange-looking metal tower on the brow of Costa Head in the Orkneys. In this area, so closely connected with the Royal Navy and the R.A.F., I thought it rather unwise to show too much curiosity about something which I imagined was connected with radar, the inevitable reason for most of the towering contraptions one finds on Britain's coastline. But I took the risk and approached one of the workmen on the site. 'What are you building?' I asked. The reply was short and to the point. 'A windmill to generate electricity,' he answered, before he walked away.

Back in London, I learned, after a few inquiries, the remarkable story behind this construction work in the far north of Britain. It is part of the larger battle that is going on to solve our electricity-supply problem on a long-term basis—looking ahead to the time when there will be plenty of power and light on tap for everybody, despite coal-mining difficulties, and without falling back on that easy dream-solution of atomic power.

THE work which has culminated in the erection of the windmill in the Orkneys started some five years ago, when members

of the Electrical Research Association began investigations into the wind-speed records of the Meteorological Office. As a result of a meeting, held under the auspices of the Electrical Research Association in London in December 1947, and attended by representatives from all authorities interested in the public supply of electricity, the Wind Power Generation Committee was set up. Led by Mr E. W. Golding, and aided by engineers of the British Electricity Authority, exploration parties visited a large number of districts in order to measure the local average annual velocity of the wind.

One area reviewed at the beginning was on the hills of Dolgarrog in North Wales, where towers varying in height from 30 to 100 feet were erected. A promising area, where the wind is almost ceaseless, was discovered on the 2300-foot-high Mynydd Mawr, among the slate-quarries some six miles south-east of Caernarvon. However, the ideal of a high-average wind, winter and summer, was not found there, but twelve months' readings taken in the Orkney Islands have demonstrated that a wind of nearly 15 miles an hour can be expected almost every day from January to December.

The amateur would consider that the ideal site for these generating windmills would be

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some windswept mountain-top where gales are almost perpetual. This is not the case. To avoid damage to the mill and the generator, devices have to be included in the construction to shift the mill out of the wind direction when gusts of 50 miles an hour and more are experienced. Thus a real gale is as useless as a dead calm.

The whole business of this most ancient form of motive-power has been analysed mathematically. Those with a head for figures may be interested to know that the power-yield is in proportion to the cube of the wind-speed. This means that a 30 mile per hour wind provides twenty-seven times the power available from a 10 mile per hour breeze. This extra strength is quite easily obtained by putting the sails well above the ground. A wind of 7 miles an hour around one's head while one is standing on the ground will invariably blow at 12 miles an hour 100 feet up. Another important point is that the gustiness of the wind at ground-level smooths out at 100 feet.

It is rather strange that windmills have not been common in Scotland in earlier centuries, for it is one of the best countries in the world for wind-power. Winds between 20 and 30 miles an hour, which are the speeds desired for ideal operation, blow more regularly in north and western Scotland than in the majority of other countries, excepting Scandinavia and the extreme western coast of France.

On the Inner Hebridean island of Tiree, for example, an average wind-speed of 15.9 miles an hour is experienced for seven days out of ten 33 feet above ground, and in the Abbotsinch area, in the Lowlands, a breeze of more than 8 miles an hour blows for the same period 100 feet up. These two places happen to have official records compiled over many years. They are, of course, typical of the whole country.

HOW best to utilise this tremendous and ceaseless power which has literally blown to waste for centuries has been the object of careful experiment by Mr Golding and his party. The result has provided something very different from the old-fashioned windmills of southern England or Holland. In the first place, the mill is quite small. Very few people would suggest it is an eyesore, compared with power-pylons, and this is an important point if ultimately there are con-

siderable numbers of them erected in the Highlands.

The slim mast of the Orkney test windmill is between 70 and 80 feet high, and the blades of the three sails are mounted horizontally on top. These are strange-looking, being about 20 feet long, and they are designed to revolve a hundred times a minute.

The theoretical output of future wind-driven power-stations might be as high as 1000 kilowatts, so that a single mast would be quite capable of providing power for all the radio-sets, light-bulbs, and cookers in a village of 500 inhabitants. A dozen of them would be sufficient to keep illuminated any town in the Highlands, with the exception of Inverness.

The cost of the generation of electricity by wind-power is infinitesimal compared with that by any other method except water-power. I know a Frenchman living near Brest who has a conventional windmill driving a war-surplus generator. He estimates that, in English money, he obtains £3 worth of electric-current a week for a cost of 1s. 4d., this taking into account depreciation, lubricating oil, and repairs!

The windmill in Orkney is an experimental machine and is not sufficient to supply the island with electricity. To mention only one of the factors limiting the supply, there are those days of mist and calm when there would be no current at all. The current from the installation at Costa Head, conveniently situated near a road and near a transmission line, is to be fed into the Board's local network, and soon a few pulses providing the light in a Kirkwall home or making a Stromness housewife's iron hot will be born by the revolutions of those slim silvery sails in the far-off Orkneys.

It should be stressed that this is no bizarre scheme to alleviate a serious problem. It is a move which Scotland should have made years ago. Denmark, in the years before the War, when she utilised every source of power and material she could lay her hands on in order to further her industries, built a network of these mills, but with a wind-regularity far below the Scottish standard they only occasionally paid their way. In America, a land with vast sources of water-power and ordinary fuel for the power-stations, conventional windmills are a common sight. These feed their current into the normal cables, and they represent a considerable contribution to the country's electricity supply. The saving

amounts to tens of thousands of dollars a year in one power-network alone.

In the British way, the present plans are going ahead cautiously. More than five years have been spent on learning new facts about the winds of Britain. Scotland, as might be expected, has proved to have the best figures. Now comes the trial period to see if the theories are borne out in practice.

There is, among the men responsible, a feeling of quiet optimism that wind-generation may help to revolutionise life in the Highlands. Maybe it will bring electric-power to remote hamlets and make small industrial plants an economic proposition. The winds of the

North, which some people say are a defect, are at last having a chance to prove their worth.

In fact, Scotland's rather notorious weather is paying a rich dividend in modern times—in electrical terms. The heavy rainfall of the mountainous regions has run to waste for æons of time. Now the vast hydroelectric stations of Loch Sloy, Lochaber, Rannoch, Tummel Bridge, Glenlee, and so on, are creating more than a million horse-power from that rain. Compared with these figures, the few thousand horse-power to be snatched from the air by the wind-generators may sound puny, but to a power-starved country it will be a worthy addition.

Weatherwise in the Wild

JAMES E. CARVER

THERE is no doubt that many birds and animals are far more sensitive to atmospheric changes than are human beings. Rooks have built up a reputation for being weather-wise, and a good many of the old saws about the bird contain a high degree of truth.

Asked if it was likely to rain, the old-time Norfolk labourer would invariably reply: 'The varmin fare to gale about,' meaning the rooks were flying about in an uneasy manner. At such times their evolutions are fascinating to watch, but a certain sign of ill to come. In a Gloucestershire home standing close to a rookery the day was always overshadowed by the announcement: 'The rooks are playing,' for it meant every kind of calamity from rain when the hay was down to a bad hunting-day, heavy going, and gloom.

Sometimes the birds will gather at a considerable height, and then a few at a time dive down in gyratory fashion with their wings half-closed until near the ground, when they open them and land. Dropping thus, they make a rushing noise which can be heard some

distance away. At other times some two or three hundred birds can be seen, apparently much excited, flying round and round in great circles, five hundred feet or so from the ground, the circles being at many different planes and angles. Some of the birds will nose-dive one hundred feet or so, and then turn upwards to resume circling. One would not like to say they do not enjoy the fun. Leicestershire folk call the display 'making pancheons,' and another local, and this time Lincolnshire, name for it, is 'tompoking.' There is an old rhyme called 'Signs of Rain,' quoted by George F. Chambers in his *The Story of the Weather* (1897), and among the thirty-seven prognostications is this one:

*And see yon rooks, how odd their flight!
They imitate the gliding kite,
And seem precipitate to fall,
As if they felt the piercing ball.*

Lincolnshire people grant the crows the same prescience, and, when they see any of these birds behaving in similar fashion, they

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say: 'The crows are winding whipcord and playing breakneck.' In his Odes Horace refers to the crow as 'the bird which forebodes impending rain,' and, as in the case of the rooks, stormy weather follows their evolutions, which are probably due to the presence of air-pockets. These are featured by descending currents of air, down which the birds tumble. On the other hand, eagles, buzzards, and gulls use thermal currents, columns of rising air, for wheeling and gaining height. Glider pilots make use of them too, and have sometimes discovered where they are by watching the flight of birds.

The rooks' playful antics usually take place towards the end of a spell of fine weather, foretelling its breaking up. An old farmer of Craven in Yorkshire used to say he solved his haymaking problems by keeping watch on the movements of rooks. When they went foraging a long way from the rookery he could depend on fine weather; if they remained near their nesting-sites it was most likely to be unsettled.

Bearing on this is the interesting experience of an observer who lay in hospital near Liverpool exactly on the return route of the rooks from their foraging expeditions. He was there in July and August, and for a fortnight great flocks of birds regularly passed over at approximately 9 p.m., flying quite leisurely. Then one evening they appeared at 7 p.m., flying rapidly. At 9 o'clock that same evening a sharp thunderstorm broke over the district. Next evening they appeared at 8 p.m., and once more rain fell two hours afterwards. The next day they turned homewards at 7 p.m., and two hours later heavy rain fell. Contrasted with this is their behaviour when fine weather is to be expected. They gather on the fallows as the sun begins to set and remain close together until dusk, almost motionless. When this happens, they are 'saying their prayers,' and the next day is certain to be fair.

Rooks are among the earliest builders, and will start as soon as January. One year when they were busy building, they suddenly deserted the nests. On mentioning this to a resident close by, a questioner was told: 'Then snow is coming, for when that is so rooks always leave their nests and go back to the deep woods.' Three days later snow did come, and the same thing happened a month later. Whether rooks have the gift of long-range forecasting, the most difficult of meteorological undertakings, has not yet been

scientifically proved, but most of us have heard: If the rooks build high and the black-birds low, look for a dry summer; wet, if the reverse is the case.

OTHER living creatures are credited with the same uncanny foreknowledge, although here again nobody has yet proved it. If moles make their runs on low-lying ground, a drought is coming, but floods are likely when these animals stay on the higher lands. They not only have a habit of forsaking the valleys for the high ground when floods are at hand, however, but they also possess an even more remarkable characteristic. According to the evidence of Hampshire mole-catchers in the Southampton district, where moles are numerous in autumn, the creatures prepare a kind of larder, or a small basin made of clay, in which they store a quantity of worms for the winter. When few of these basins are made, the winter is invariably mild; when they are numerous, a hard winter is always counted upon by the mole-catchers, who swear that this is true—and the belief is not confined to that part of England.

Bees seemingly know in the spring what the coming summer will be like. When they work unusually hard in this season, the summer is likely to be wet and cold. A curious piece of evidence came from Adinkerke, Belgium, in June 1938, when severe earthquake shocks were felt. A beekeeper at the place named reported to Uccle Observatory that just before the tremors he found the 300,000 bees he owned hovering in evident irritation, whereas at that hour, around noon, they are usually dispersed and gathering pollen.

An American naturalist once wrote that whenever he had a flight of woodcock on his plantation a cold wave could be expected within thirty-six hours. These birds, apparently knowing of the change of weather that was imminent, moved from the North Carolina coast to that of South Carolina, the flight taking only a few hours. He knew a flight of woodcock to arrive one twilight, and the cold wave to come twenty-four hours later.

In Britain the redwings fly in front of heavy frost. Their arrival from northern Europe in autumn is a sure harbinger of severer weather. Ducks show certain signs of apprehension if a thunderstorm is on the way. The cock-pheasant, too, will utter its alarm rattle from

WEATHERWISE IN THE WILD

its roost when thunder is yet too far distant for human ears.

SOME of the most remarkable evidence of animal foreknowledge of the weather is seen in the case of sheep. The shepherd learns much from his charges, and perhaps it is not altogether strange that one of the earliest collections of weather lore is 'The Shepherd of Banbury's Rules for the Judging of the Weather and Its Changes.'

Sussex shepherds, for instance, prophesy the coming of snow days before it falls. They say that whenever snow is on the way their sheep show signs of great uneasiness when up on the downs, and that when they are driven down to the pens they avoid the hollows where drifts are likely to accumulate. Welsh sheep, too, feeding on the hills of Carnarvon, will come down of their own accord to the vales when snow is in the air, although it may be some days before there is a fall. The Manx sheep, descendants of the loaghtan, probably the most ancient British breed, are said to know when snow is coming, and of their own accord they will find their way from the hill-tops to the lower levels.

Peasants in Europe closely watch many animals in order to discover what kind of a winter they are to have. A sharp winter is predicted if the chamois get their winter coats early. In southern Europe the country people asseverate that the wild-boars never fail as weather-prophets. The kind of winter to be anticipated is based on the time when the boars make their first appearance in the forests at the foot of the mountains. Early migration to the valleys presages a cold spell. Similar prescience is exhibited by the bear, and there is a saying among people where bears are common that if their tracks are seen after the first fall of snow, look for a mild winter, for the creatures are not troubling to go to winter-quarters early.

In Germany the marmot can tell just as much about the type of winter that is coming as the mole. The marmot buries itself a foot and a half deep in the earth previous to a hard winter, laying in a plentiful supply of food and straw for bedding. At other times, if a mild season is due, it hibernates only a few inches below the surface. In America the representative of the marmot is the woodchuck or ground-hog. One of the most important dates in the calendar of America's amateur meteor-

ologists is Ground-hog Day, which falls in February. According to tradition, ground-hogs emerge from their winter lairs on that day and critically survey the weather. If they are able to see their own shadows, they return to their winter-quarters in the knowledge that a further six weeks of cold weather lies ahead—at least so asserts country lore. If no shadow is visible, the sagacious beasts greet the return of spring, and make for the nearest farm to enjoy the first meal of the new year, for they hibernate from autumn onwards.

In the New World, grouse, wild-turkeys, squirrels, even humble wood-mice, and deer have been observed to possess clairvoyance as to weather. In Germany when a cold winter is on the way the roebuck grow thicker coats, and in America deer appear to be equipped with sentient barometers, for they seem able to forecast weather, fair or foul, for a whole day in advance. They have been seen leaving sheltered glades where they were weathering out a storm, and have been watched trooping up to exposed slopes of a mountain, where many hours later the sun shone. On the other hand, while there is no sign of a storm, they will seek some remote sanctuary, knowing bad weather is coming.

ZOO inmates and domestic animals are almost as reliable as the radio report or the household barometer. In the aquarium a species of fish called the thunder-loach starts swimming about in a great fluster when unsettled weather is due. When wolves begin to emit long-drawn-out howls a change in the weather for the worse is imminent. Dogs will howl, too, and indicate approaching bad weather by refusing to eat meat, and eating grass, or even scraping holes in the ground. Cattle are restless and butt each other, while donkeys bray loudly. This is believed to be a return to prehistoric practice, when they brayed loudly and then gathered closely together for protection until the storm was over. Pigs are much affected by a change of conditions, and they will race about with pieces of straw and litter in their mouths, yokels saying they 'can see the wind.' Many old farm labourers put much faith in these symptoms, and say that animals are never far out.

Cats are sensitive of the nearness of wild weather. A countryman tells how before a heavy snowfall a village woman told him to expect it because her cat had been sleeping

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back to the fire and with the back of its head to the ground for the previous four days. This may have sounded very much like an old wives' tale, but an extremely violent blizzard occurred, just as the woman had predicted. An interesting superstition associated with cats was once widely held by seamen, who during a prolonged calm used to throw one of the creatures overboard in order to raise a wind. They said that when a cat was frisky she had a gale of wind in her tail.

It may be that the senses of animals are quickly affected by minute atmospheric changes, and even among human beings something of the sort is not infrequently experienced, more often in summertime, when people are uneasy during close weather and feel a thunderstorm. Old people say that their rheumatic twinges are also very reliable prognosticators of wet weather.

Creatures living near water are sometimes able to forecast the weather. Marshmen say that if kingfishers place their nestholes high above the river the summer will be wet; if the holes are low down there will be a long spell of dry weather. A kind of living barometer, if one may term it so, once popular in Germany, consisted of a glass jar about a foot and a half high and six inches across. Three or four inches of water were kept in it, and a small ladder reached from the bottom to the top of the jar. On the approach of dry weather the frogs, which were kept in the jar, mounted the ladder; but when wet weather was to be expected they descended into the water.

EVEN in the insect world we see the same trait exhibited. If a spider is lazy and sits complacently thinking of whatever occupies the spider mind, then it is a sign it is going to rain, but if it busies itself and runs here and there in the rain, fine weather is likely to follow soon. Observers say that if spiders make their webs with the supporting strands shorter than usual rain is near; if, on the other hand, they are long, a fine day can be looked forward to. Another saying is that if a spider is seen changing the construction of its web between six and seven in the evening it is a sign of approaching fine weather.

Butterflies also seem to sense weather changes. F. W. Frohawk, the authority on these creatures, states that towards evening, in fine weather, butterflies may be found in numbers on the heads of flowers and grasses, where they rest for the night, but before adverse conditions they conceal themselves among the vegetation and completely disappear. Therefore, should they make their disappearance towards evening on a fine day, it is a sure sign that a spell of dull, unsettled weather will certainly follow.

Such instances as these go far to prove that animals and birds, and even insects, are forewarned—sometimes in a matter of hours, in other cases of days—of changes in the weather, and certain of the examples seem to show that in some instances the sense they possess is subtle enough to enable them to make preparation for the whole of an approaching season.

February Snow

*Mark the bird that flits and hops
Through the ghostly shrouded scene.
See the little snowy drops
With their tiny tints of green:
These, like wraiths of living flowers,
Without nectar for the bees,
Deck the earth in icy bowers
'Neath the leafless, lifeless trees.
Yet the snowdrops seem to say:
'We are children of the spring
Though we haunt the woodland way
When no blackbird dares to sing.'
So the flitting bird may know
Why they blossom in the snow!*

JAMES MACALPINE.



The Madman

P. ROSS

MEDICAL practice can be a dreary business, as remote in nature from the popular conception as routine police work no doubt is from the exploits of Sherlock Holmes or the more topical adventures of P.C. 49.

I was having a specially tiresome day at my consulting-rooms in Welbeck Street. It was a bleak February afternoon in 1946, and London was at its most depressing, when I was told that a Mr Keith Ferguson wished to see me. I well remember how the announcement came as a blessed relief—how visions of grouse moors and salmon streams flooded into my mind. This I knew was not to be a consultation. Ferguson was never ill. In the twenty-odd years I had known him he had never asked my advice on any matter more important to his well-being than the choice of a fly or the merits of a gun or a rod. We were not what you would call close friends, but we did share a love of sport, in particular of salmon-fishing. A consultation with Keith usually led to a week-end on the Wye or an expedition to the Spey; at least, it did so in the good old days. My heart indeed leaped up. Soon the spring fish would be running well. I suddenly remembered I had not handled a fishing-rod since 1939.

But I was to suffer disappointment. It was not fishing altogether that had brought

Ferguson to see me on that dreary February afternoon. Indeed, I was to hear as queer a tale as ever was related in that consulting-room, a place where strange stories were not altogether unusual. Let me tell you I had not seen Ferguson for seven long years. As I said, it was 1946, and a dreadful war had not long ended, a period when both of us had other things to think about than salmon-fishing. At the outbreak of war Ferguson was a District Commissioner in Kenya Colony, and was serving on a frontier post. Much against his will, for he was essentially a man of action, he had been compelled to stick out the war years there. It was a lonely station I gathered from his few irregular letters, where district officers were not usually posted for more than a year, or two at most. Experience has taught colonial administrations the unwisdom of keeping men in such places for long periods. They develop mental kinks, and are prone to actions which make them an embarrassment to the secretariat, as well as objects of not always sympathetic club gossip.

We greeted each other warmly. My first impression was that Ferguson looked little older, and indeed extraordinarily well, in spite of his long frontier spell. We chatted with animation for some minutes, exchanging experiences, asking after mutual friends, and

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talking of many matters which do not concern this tale. I have not practised medicine for twenty-five years without acquiring some ability in sizing people up, and, as the conversation slowed down, my first impression altered. I began to sense that something was amiss. This was not quite the old spontaneous Ferguson. There was something on his mind. I had not long to wait for confirmation. 'Look here, Rob,' he suddenly blurted out, after a longish pause in the conversation, 'you know I'm quite sane, don't you?'

So it was to be a consultation after all. This was disappointing. I felt myself get back into medical harness as, hoping my voice did not show my feelings, I replied with an air of banter: 'Of course, Keith, old man. What the devil are you driving at?'

Ferguson was serious now, and there was a queer look in his eyes as he slowly answered: 'I've been seeing things, Rob, things that were not there—that could not possibly have been there.' His voice had a strange tone, and he appeared genuinely agitated.

I pushed a box of cigarettes towards him, took one myself, and said: 'Suppose you just tell us all about it.'

He lit a cigarette. 'Righto,' he said, 'I will. It will be a relief to get it off my chest.'

'I'VE told you,' Ferguson began, 'that I've been up to Mackenzie's place in Sutherland. You may wonder what took me there at this time of year. There's no need to tell you that a clean fish in the Armine in early February is a bit of a rarity. Well, the fact is London was a bit too much for me after all those years on the frontier—couldn't stand the crowds, you know, and I took a fancy to see the old north country again. It was my last chance—got to return to Kenya next week for a spell. Anyhow, I went there. No need to ask about the fishing. It was hopeless. The weather was wretched, ice and snow water coming down the river. No one had even tried it, not even the keeper. You can imagine how galling it was to look at a river completely out of order, and know that in a few short weeks, just when I would be rounding Guardafui, the springers would probably be running thick. You will not think it strange that I walked along the banks a few times, just to look at the old pools and spots where I've had such sport, and you too, in the old days.'

'I certainly don't,' I agreed.

'Well,' continued Ferguson, 'you remember the beat below the Ford. It was the last day of my stay, and I thought I would take a walk along there for a bit of exercise. It was about half-past four in the afternoon, and you know how short the days are in that latitude at this time of year. It was already dusk. The weather had been vile all day, wind and sleet-showers, but it had eased up temporarily. I took the fishing-path from the Ford Bridge and came downstream by the Fannich and Stony Pools. After those, you remember, comes the Madman—queer name to give a salmon-pool, I've always thought. The locals have a yarn about some daft chap drowning himself there a long time ago. I remember young Macleod the keeper once telling me quite seriously that the place had been haunted ever since. It was almost dark now, and I was just thinking of striking off across the moor to the Loch road, and so home, when it happened.' Ferguson stopped and lit another cigarette. I noticed that he made an undue business of it.

'Yes,' I said, 'when what happened?'

'When I heard it,' he went on, 'the reel! It was shrieking, screeching, being pulled out by a running fish—a good big salmon-reel too. There was no mistaking the sound. So there is someone trying his luck, I thought to myself in amazement, as I turned round in an effort to see the fisherman, whoever he was. But the Madman Pool stretched below me quite empty. There was no fisherman. There was no one there but myself. You know the place, Rob—the long pool with the low bank and flat moor on the fishing side, where I was, the big stone near the head, and near to this bank, on the other side, the sheer cliff coming down to the water. A man or even a small boy could not hide himself there. It was certainly dusk, but quite light enough for me to see anyone who could possibly be fishing. And then, as I strained my eyes up and down the pool, the reel went off again, harder than ever—and now I saw him—no, not the fisherman, but the fish. He leaped into the air, near the head, three times, a fine clean fish about fifteen pounds, then tore down the pool and leaped again at the tail-end, the reel screeching all the time. Then all was quiet. I never heard the reel or saw the fish again. How long I stood there I don't know. I was dumb-founded, and trying hard to think. It was getting quite dark now, and that Madman is a desolate, eerie spot at best. A curlew

suddenly started its melancholy piping. I think I got into a sort of panic, and believe I actually ran until I reached the Loch road. When I got to the Lodge Mackenzie asked me if I'd seen a ghost. I didn't tell him, Rob. I've told no one but you, and I don't think I ever shall.

'Well, that is my story, Rob, and, before you say anything, I would ask you please not to attempt to explain this business in any natural way. Believe me, I've thought hard and often since then, and there just is no natural explanation. That fish was hooked. It was not having fun and games on the surface. Salmon do not do that in February snow water. Poachers do not set lines attached to salmon-reels, even if they were mad enough to set lines at all in such conditions. That fish was pulling line off a reel, but there was no rod and no angler. The only conclusion is that I imagined the whole thing. I saw a non-existent fish, and heard a reel that was not there. It is not pleasant, Rob, to have to admit that one's mind has gone wrong.'

He slumped despondently into his chair.

I DID my best for Ferguson. It is not often that a patient, after relating his symptoms, sums up his own case, and makes as fair and likely a diagnosis as he had done, for I had little doubt, as I listened to his tale unfold, that Ferguson must have indeed imagined this strange scene at the Madman, that his leaping fish and shrieking reel were what are medically known as visual and auditory hallucinations. It seemed, in spite of my first impressions, that the long spell on the frontier had not left Ferguson unscathed. I was glad to learn that he was returning to Kenya for a short time only, a matter of some months, and that he was being given some special job at the secretariat in Nairobi, where a very different atmosphere from the isolation of the frontier would prevail. I felt confident that his former vigorous mentality would soon reassert itself. I did my best to reassure him along those lines, and was glad to note that I appeared to have some success. At dinner, to which he stayed that evening, he was very much more like his old self.

A few days afterwards I saw him off at Victoria, exchanging promises to meet again on his return. I was sorry to note, however, that he did not offer to make any date for fishing.

I THOUGHT of Ferguson many times in the following weeks, but, in the press of work, my old friend and his remarkable tale faded gradually from my memory. Indeed, I had almost forgotten it, when, in mid-April, the arrival of a letter postmarked Armine brought it back with a rush. It contained an invitation from Mackenzie to go up there for a week's fishing. In pre-war years I had enjoyed Mackenzie's hospitality on two or three occasions. I accepted gladly, not only because this was an opportunity for a splendid week's sport, but because I felt a curiously strong desire to see once more the scene of Ferguson's adventure.

In due course I made my arrangements about patients, and on the seventeenth boarded the night-train for Inverness. Next morning the slow train took me northwards, winding its way cautiously along the shores of sunlit firths, where signs of spring were already advanced, though the great mountain masses away to the west were still capped with snow. After London I revelled in this familiar country, 'the old true land of the North.' In the afternoon I was met at the little station of Armine, and a motor-drive took me to the Lodge.

Mackenzie was warm in his welcome, and his news that the river was doing well was sweet to the ear of an eager fisherman. There was quite a party at the Lodge, and conversation that evening was centred mainly on fishing exploits and prospects. I did, however, succeed in getting my host aside and quizzing him on the subject of Ferguson. Like myself, Mackenzie had thought he looked very well, and said he had been in very good spirits. 'Except the last evening,' he added, 'when I did think he looked a bit glum—probably fed up at the idea of leaving just when the river might have come into order at any time.'

Mackenzie himself lived for the spring fishing.

I WAS on the river soon after breakfast next morning. Mackenzie had given me Sutherland as ghillie, an old experienced hand at the game, who had fished with me on previous occasions. Like many of his kind in the county which gave him his name he was a man of more than ordinary intelligence, inclined to dogmatism on the subject of tackle and methods, but, on the whole, an excellent companion for a day's sport.

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I was allotted the Ford beat, which included the Madman Pool, but such is the fascination of salmon-fishing that soon I had forgotten Ferguson once more, lost in concentration on the business in hand, covering the water foot by foot, awaiting that sudden swirl and grab at the fly, which, when seen and felt, repay the true fisherman for hours of patient endeavour. The Otter Pool, after yielding a large kelt with maggot-infested gills, which I duly returned to resume his weary journey to the sea, rewarded me with a fine ten-pounder. I lost a good one in the Stony Pool, and was rather irritated by Sutherland's comments, which implied that I had not been so clever as I might have been. When at last we reached the Madman I woke with a start to the fact that here was the scene of the invisible fisherman. I also became aware that it was one o'clock and that the sky had become clouded and was threatening a heavy rain-shower. There was a luncheon-hut hard by, so, calling to Sutherland, I reeled up and made for it, just as the first large drops began to fall.

'Might as well have lunch now,' I said. So in the cramped but waterproof interior we got out our sandwiches. The rain had evidently set in and I was hungry enough to enjoy a break. We ate in silence. I finished off with a cup of tea and Sutherland with the bottle of ale which nowadays appears to have become the routine perquisite of the ghillie. 'Gents,' which is the curious generic applied in the North to fishing-tenants and such like, would do well to observe the change in custom and reserve their whisky-flasks for special occasions. My companion now seemed inclined to talk, and was beginning to tell me in true ghillie fashion of the fishing virtues of the Madman, with chapter and verse of fish he had seen caught and lost there, when I interrupted him, I don't know why, by asking how the pool got such a peculiar name.

'I thought you would be knowing that,' he said. 'It's no' much of a story—just that a daft chap got drowned there a long time ago. From what I've heard he wisna what you wud call a madman—just a bit simple like, but they say that when the moon wis full he wud get very excited and wander aboot all over the countryside. At times he wud take a fit for the fishing, and come doon to the pool here with an old bamboo rod, scrambling doon the cliff, aye, at any time of the year and any time of the day or night. The keepers and the water-bailies took no notice of him. Well,

they found him in the pool one morning, drowned, and his rod halfway up the bank. He must have been in too much of a hurry to get to his fishing, and tumbled doon the cliff into the water. The story has been added to since then, and of course there's some folk say the place is haunted with all manner of appareitions.' Sutherland chuckled. 'I've never seen any,' he continued, 'though Macleod the keeper swears he saw a man fishing there once in the gloaming, and when he went up to him to ask him aboot per-meession, he just suddenly wisna there any more.' He laughed outright. 'Macleod doesna tell the yarn so often since Stevie the postman told him it wis a peety he wisna so quick off his mark himself as the poachers. But it is certainly an unlucky pool,' he went on, a more serious tone in his voice, 'because now it is no' one but two people that have been drowned there, and the last wis certainly no' a madman, forbye it's no' certain at all that it is drowned he wis. But likely you'll have heard aboot it.'

Hope was evident in his voice that such was not the case, and here was a chance to tell a really good story. I felt a quickening interest. Was there, after all, some connection between the strange happenings at the Madman and Ferguson's experience? 'No, I have not,' I said.

'WELL, it wis a queer business,' Sutherland set off, 'and they are still talking aboot it in the village. I'm thinking you wudna be knowing the chap. His name wis Tom Armstrong, no' a common one aboot here, you'll agree, but common enough on the Border. It's likely his forebears came up here at the time the Duke wis bringing up shepherds from the South to look after his sheep. Folk here were no' so fond o' his dam' sheep, seeing they were being cleared off their land to make room for them.' The ancient Highland anger at the Evictions was in Sutherland's voice, and I feared he might digress into a polemic on the Clearances. However, he went on: 'Aye, he wis no' a native, but he wis like enough to the rest of us in most ways. Anyway, he wis a good fisherman, and a good poacher. They say poaching's in the blood on the Border. He did a good bit of ghillying at one time, but they say he fell foul of the factor over the poaching, and it's many years now since he went out with the gents. There were

some gents that were sorry to lose him, for there were few ghillies that could show them where to put their flies like Tom could.

'He wis a queer sort of chap. He didna have much to say for himself, or take much interest in the affairs of the parish, but you wid aye find him on the river when it wis in order for sea-trout, and many's the salmon he caught by accident' (there were inverted commas round 'accident') 'when fishing for them. There is a free stretch, you know, from the sea up to the Rock Pool, for sea-trout, and the bailie couldna put him off it. Now that he's dead there's no harm in telling you that Tom Armstrong wid have more salmon out of the Rock Pool in any season than most of you gents had out of the rest of the river. And what is remarkable is that it wis all by fair fishing. That wis the funny thing aboot it. Tom wis a poor man, but he widna have been found dead with all that netting and ripping gang in the village. All his fish were got fair and square on the fly. It wis the legitimate drama for Tom. Man, but he wis a beautiful caster. I've never seen anyone throw such a bonnie line, except maybe the late Viscount Grey of Fallodon, and even he widna be so good at the Rock Pool with the wall at his back. Some of the Glasgow visitors used to try to educate Tom about threadlines and multiplying-reels, but when they had all finished making the Rock Pool fair froth with their spinners and spoons, Tom wid be doon early next morning and nip out a beauty with a wee fly he made himself. He widna even use a worm. Aye, I've seen gents that were no' so particular as Tom.' Sutherland gave me a sidelong glance to see how I received this jibe, but the listening 'gent' was only waiting with impatience for the story to develop.

'Well,' he continued, 'when Tom had to give up the ghillying he stayed more and more on the bit land he had in Brochrobbie, doing a bit of rabbiting and odd jobs, but he wis still to be seen on the river when condeetions were right—up to last season, when we missed him, and next we heard wis that he wis in bed, with the doctor attending him. It seems he had yon trouble you read so much aboot in the papers nowadays, the coronary thrombosis, isn't it?' He rolled out the term as one having found authority in some medical dictionary. 'Aye, that wis it, and poor Tom wis in his bed until the best of the fishing wis over, and he didna do a stroke of work again the year. He seemed to improve for a bit, and

wis getting aboot, but at Christmas we heard he wis in his bed again. I never heard any more aboot him until yon day in February, the sixth I think it wis.' Sutherland paused. Outside the rain was beating down steadily, but, even if it were fine, I was prepared to forsake fishing and endure if necessary a further hour of irrelevances to hear the end of his tale.

'Aye,' he resumed, his Highland drawl more maddeningly deliberate than ever, 'it wid be very early on the morning of the sixth that Mackay the keeper from the Crask wis taking a walk along the river. When he wis passing by just out by the Madman here he saw something that made him stop. His eye wis caught by something in the water, just beyond the big ston' at the head of the pool. He went closer to look, and it wis the heel of a man's boot sticking up. Mackay said afterwards that it must have been the shine of the heelplate that drew his eye. He waded out and found there wis a leg in the boot, which wis jammed in a crack in the rock, and a man's body in the deep water beyond. Beside it, on the flat ledge on the far side of the big ston', wis the butt-end and reel of a salmon-rod, two feet of the butt showing out of the water. Mackay pulled the body out without much deeficulty, and neither wis it deeficult for him to see that it wis no other than poor Tom Armstrong. Mackay told me he couldna resist the temptation to go in again immediately and get the rod. "Man," he said, "I wis half-thinking to find a fish on it. The butt had got caught in yon split in the far side of the ston' and the reel wis free. The line wis out to the end of the backing. I reeled it up, but there wisna a fish. The backing and line, a good hundred yards of it, wis all there, and a strong trace and cast, but no fly. The gut wis clean broken at the end of the cast."'

Light was pouring in on me, and I only half-heard the end of Sutherland's story. In my mind I was already composing a cablegram to Keith that would gladden his heart.

'It's no deeficult,' Sutherland went on, 'to see what had happened. It seems the doctor had told Tom he wid have to give up pheesical work altogether, even the fishing, except maybe for a wee bit in the summer. You can imagine what a blow that wid be to him. He wis sixty-two, and I suppose he knew fine he wis no' likely to get better but worse. He must have said to himself: "I'll just have a last crack at it before it's too late." So, on that stormy February day, he got out his rod and

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made for the Madman. He wis right in thinking the Madman wid be his best chance, as the few spring fish that wid be running might well take a rest there. The Rock Pool wid be no use. If he waited longer, the gents might be fishing the preserved water. Quite likely it wis late in the afternoon he went, when no one wis likely to be about. And he must have been lucky, if it's lucky you wid call it, for there's no doot he had a fish on. He wis no' the man to lose his fly any other way. He must have waded out through the shallow water to get a stance on the ledge at

the big ston', which shows he wis no' himself, as, if he wis right, he could have covered the pool easily from the bank. They put him doon as having been drooned, but I'm thinking it's more likely that, what with the exertion and the excitement of playing the salmon, his heart just stopped beating. Yon wisna the chap to slip and fall in the river. Aye,' concluded Sutherland, 'he must have been dying to have a cast, and it's die he did of having it. Man, but I'd like fine to know if Tom's last one wis a clean fish!'

'I think,' I said, 'it was.'

Pushing Your Way into the News

The Press Relations Officer at Work

GEORGE BARTRAM

PRESS Relations, once a term mainly associated with Government ministries and the Civil Service, has grown in significance since the war years. To-day, almost every big firm or organisation, body or association, stage, screen, radio, or television personality, council or committee practises some form of press relations.

The term simply means contact with the press. In the everyday thirst for knowledge it is taken for granted that every activity, whether large or small, should be spotlighted in some part of the public press. And throughout the country a small army of press relations officers (P.R.O.s), press agents, or publicity men—any term, depending on the official's opinion of himself, will do—is at work pushing its even larger army of clients into print. Usually, however, a press relations officer looks after the interests of a government department or a firm; a press agent is a person generally associated with the handling of personal publicity for stage, screen, radio, or television personalities; and a publicity

man is the title given to anybody in the press relations field. Of course, women make admirable P.R.O.s and the like, and many can be found in these jobs to-day.

I BELONG to the press relations fraternity. At once let me say that it is a harrowing, breathless, nerve-racking, twenty-four-hour-a-day occupation, but I love it. One needs a deal of impudence, a cast-iron constitution, and a great fund of patience. These are only the physical attributes, however. A good publicity man has to have a thorough knowledge of the working of the press, sound journalistic ability, and, probably most important of all, the sense to know a good story!

There is no special academic knowledge required in the art of press relations, unless it be a love of good English. It is a job which, if properly handled, can bring the most satisfying results. Even though one's own literary effort is inevitably altered in the needs of news-

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print economy, to me it is still one of the most soul-warming things in life to see a story of my creation in print.

In my own particular business I look after the interests of a number of varying clients. It is hard work, made more so on account of the amount of material which never sees the public's eye. Not every story gets through. Indeed, probably more than fifty per cent fall by the wayside. That is why a publicity man must have a fairly sound bank-balance to pay for the heavy cost of stationery, postage, and telephone-calls. Just think, a telephone-call to a national paper can cost anything up to a pound!

The be-all and end-all of every aspiring publicist is the national press. A story in a big London daily paper or weekly magazine is just about the most valuable publicity anyone could wish for. And it is for this reason that the columns of these lofty publications present a tough exterior to publicity men. Think for a moment. Thousands of individuals all over the world are pouring in millions of words every day to the nationals. To be considered in this welter of wordage, your contribution has to be of outstanding news interest and concisely written. However, as publicity men know, there are hundreds of other less impregnable outlets for their news.

Handling your clients is in itself a task which calls for great tact and diplomacy. If the managing director of Bloggins's Dog Biscuits has just completed thirty years with his company he expects to read about it in as many papers as possible. And if it doesn't make the front pages, very often he wants to know why. Likewise, if Betty Bolster finds that the news of her sensational success in pantomime has not been given the press she thinks it deserves, she demands to know, in no uncertain terms, why she is paying you. On the other side of the fence, you have to cater for the wrath of Harry Headline of the *Clarion* if Freddie Frontpage gets his story in first. Then there is the smart journalist who gets the tip-off on a certain story, rings up your client direct, and kills it for every other paper.

Many publicity men concentrate on one special line and they may be employed directly by one particular firm or body. Film-stars like Frank Sinatra may have as many as four or five publicity men working for them full-time. The financial outlay is tremendous,

but Sinatra's bank-balance proves that it is the right policy. Show-business has more people working on publicity than any other business or profession.

To-day, a big firm producing consumer goods and even basic materials considers it essential to have a P.R.O. on the premises or to engage an outside man. Good press relations is as important as a good advertising campaign—and the cost is nowhere near as great.

I LOOK after the press interests of a bicycle firm, an ice-cream manufacturer, an insurance company, a bucket manufacturer, two theatres, a radio act, and a cabaret artiste. In addition, I have lots of odd assignments, such as publicising a special ball, concert, or exhibition. Even a prominent local personality may feel it time that he or she should be in the news again, and will pay for a short campaign.

My work entails visiting the factories of the firms, talking with individuals, going backstage at the theatres, and keeping in constant touch with people to whom I give personal publicity. From all these activities I gather facts, ideas for stories, and even material for big magazine articles. I then have to decide whether the story is big enough for nationwide circulation or whether it should be kept strictly local. It might only justify a paragraph in the trade press, but my job is to *get my client into print* and, providing nothing slanderous appears, it follows automatically that the news is good publicity.

Factories always have their quota of old employees. Stories of their career continue to make the news-pages of the provincial and trade press, as do changes in leading personnel and happenings to local employees, but quite often something really unusual turns up which may be featured in papers all over the country. I have literally wrung some stories dry—and often they have cropped up for a new life twelve months later.

A chance remark, if investigated, may turn into a good story. One of the best I ever handled originally came to me in this way. Of the firms I represent, one has a factory in Wales. It is surrounded for miles by small villages, each of which sends its quota of workers to the factory. Many of them come great distances by bus; others, nearer, come by cycle. A middle-aged lady, however, cycled

fourteen miles each morning from a village in England and cycled the same distance at night. In addition, she looked after her husband and family and spent a busy week-end at the local church. A good story? It went into four national dailies. And a week-end paper with a three-million circulation sent a girl reporter to do the early morning ride with the employee; we had a page article as a result.

At the same firm a director casually mentioned that he was cycling from the Birmingham factory to the factory in Wales for a bet. This was consequently publicised widely and photographers turned out to picture him en route.

Theatres, of course, lend themselves to publicity in a big way. Care has to be taken, however, for papers can smell out a stunt immediately. It always makes good publicity if a star is understudied at short notice or if he or she has some particularly unusual hobby which can be built up into a story. Human interest is the predominating feature in theatre

publicity. Industrially, it is hard facts, figures, new processes, and, again, human interest which capture column interest.

The most important side of press relations is to maintain good relations with the papers you are aiming to get into. Whether it be a leading writer on a London daily or a scrubby reporter on a weekly rag, every pressman should be treated honestly. If a pressman knows he can trust you he will come to you for information at times when you yourself may not have much to offer.

Yes, press relations is an exacting job. Whatever you are publicising it is a tough occupation, for you are up against tremendous opposition. It is completely will-o'-the-wisp. Many of your words and ideas vanish into thin air, and what have you to show in return? A wastepaper-basket brimming over. But, believe me, to a publicity man there is no greater joy than seeing his work in print. It is the final satisfying link in a long chain of work.

Since Your Youth

*Since your youth can last not ever
Time I know our love must sever.
Even golden youth shall keep
A final rendezvous with sleep,
And the loftiest tree must fall,
And oblivion waits us all,
While you and all my dreams shall pass,
Frail visions mirrored in time's glass.*

*But how can love philosophise
Beyond the lips, beyond the eyes?
Now I must have you while desire
Burns in my blood a twisting fire!
Darkness will fall when we two part,
Hand from hand and heart from heart,
And there's no comfort in the wise
Kindred to a lover's eyes.*

*Though my love be as the river,
Shifting, fleeting, passing ever,
Still your beauty and my love
Fit each other hand to glove
Since both pass and fade away
When the sunset ends our day—
And my heart must still despair
Youth that passes, passing fair!*

JOHN BARRON MAYS.

Australian Aboriginal Smoke-Signals

EDGAR BEE

PROBABLY since the first Europeans reached Australia it has been recognised that the aborigines use smoke-signals; but controversy still exists concerning the degree of communication that can take place by this means. The mystery is heightened by the secretiveness of the old men of the groups still living in their tribal state. It is said that they continue to guard their knowledge from the younger men.

T. A. Magarey, in a paper, 'Smoke Signals of Australian Aborigines,' published in 1893 in the Report of the Fifth Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, declared that the Australian aborigine has a very efficient system of smoke-signals. This paper appears to have been based on well-authenticated cases. Even now it is difficult to add much to what the author put forward.

The earliest existing record of smoke-signals in Australia came from Captain James Cook, who discovered the eastern shore of the continent in April 1770. Signals which were sent into the air to warn of the approach of his 'strange big canoe' told Captain Cook that the country was inhabited. Later, Matthew Flinders, in 1802, when exploring Spencer Gulf, South Australia, noted signal-smokes to the north-east, and came to the conclusion that the natives were numerous. Many other explorers have recorded smoke-warnings of their approach.

ACCORDING to Magarey, variations of the signal are made by the colour or hue of the smoke, the size of the column raised, more or less rapid change, time of day, and site of the signal. 'Common and unimportant signals last only a minute, perhaps, and are

raised anywhere,' he wrote. 'Long-distance signals require a larger, denser volume of smoke, more careful and elaborate manipulation, and are maintained generally for a longer space of time. Anyone devoting attention to variations of smoke-form, and especially if he will institute experiments, will quickly learn to detect numerous changes of form where formerly nothing of the kind arrested attention; they were there, but were not seen.'

Magarey particularised the varieties of smoke-form most generally in use—a slender column of pale-hued smoke; a heavy column of the same hue; slender and heavy columns of black or dark smoke; spiral-coil forms of both pale-hued and black smoke; interrupted or intermittent smokes; side puffs of smoke; balls, or balloons, or cloudlets of smoke; parallels of smoke, either from the same fire or adjacent fires; two or more in line; groups or clusters of smokes; individual smokes, being either alike or different in form or hue; festoons of smoke. He then described the methods of producing these smokes, and gave the names of tribes using them, with illustrations of their use.

Among the authenticated examples, Magarey mentioned how news of the death of two men in a railway accident was conveyed, by relayed signals, some 320 miles in the Northern Territory. Smoke-signals giving the salient details of the accident reached Charlotte Waters telegraph-station the following day. By that evening the message had been relayed by smoke to Crown Point cattle-station, 56 miles away. The station manager and other Europeans treated the news conveyed to them by the station aborigines as an idle or confused report, until confirmation in writing reached the station at 1 p.m. next day. Meanwhile,

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smoke-signals sent the news on to the Hermannsburg Aboriginal Mission Station, 265 miles north-west from Crown Point.

Magarey explained his theory as follows: 'There are many signals in everyday use in station life in Central Australia. The native station-hands use smoke-signals as a matter of daily convenience. The movements of the manager, of the police, of the ration-cart, of natives themselves, of mobs of cattle, horses, and sheep, are constantly indicated. The message in question could, conceivably, be smoke-flagged by the use of seven code words, in the native fashion, in constant use in the region—e.g. (1) "Almerta boss" (headman, master, owner); (2) "Crown Point" (localities having code signals); (3) "with comrade" (also an idea in constant use); (4) "in wheelbarrow" (every wheeled vehicle is termed a wheelbarrow in Central Australia); (5) "nanto" (horse); (6) "all swallowed up" (i.e. all killed outright); (7) "dichika" (devil, i.e. railway-engine). So reading: "The Almerta boss belonging to Crown Point, with a comrade in a buggy, with a horse, are killed by a railway-engine."'

Magarey added: 'Further illustrations might be abundantly multiplied, but space will not permit; sufficient has been presented to show the marvellous skill of the aborigine as a signaller.' The paper concluded with a hope that anthropologists would bring to light new facts on the subject. However, it does not appear that much fresh information has since emerged. In fact, a great deal of the information contained in this early paper appears to have been subsequently overlooked.

H. A. LINDSAY, a South Australian, in a letter published in *Walkabout* (September 1948), claims that smoke-signals always have prearranged meanings, unless they are distress-signals or merely recall-signs. 'If, say, the young men of a tribe are out hunting,' he said, 'while the women and old men are watching for a school of fish to appear in the bay, and fish are sighted, the smoke is made at once and the hunting parties hurry back and help

drive the fish into the shallows. If a white man arrives at the camp, the smoke goes up in the same way to recall the hunters. The breaking of a smoke column into distinct puffs by sweeping a green bough over the fire is done only to distinguish that smoke from that of the ordinary fire; the puffs have no other message.'

Other correspondents to *Walkabout* have supported Mr Lindsay's general theme, that the sending of complicated messages by smoke is 'just myth.' Charles P. Mountford, an Australian anthropologist, makes clear his own assessment of smoke-signals in *Brown Men and Red Sand*. He writes: 'Talk with the aborigines themselves made it quite clear to me that their method of signalling was so simple that . . . complex details could not have been transmitted.' He attributes the wealth of information which aborigines are able, very often, to get from a simple signal as 'only the result of what is, to them, easy deduction from familiar circumstances.'

As an example of this process of deduction—quite simple, on examination—Mr Mountford explains: 'Although the smoke-signals throughout Central Australia are particularly simple, the deserts are ideal for their transmission. The country is level for a hundred miles or more, and the ubiquitous spinifex, when lit, gives a column of dense black smoke which can be seen for long distances. The aborigines, when hunting or travelling, continually light the spinifex to let the other family groups know of their movements. As the speed of those groups is seldom more than two or three miles an hour, and a smoke can be clearly visible at 20 miles, or even further, every family within that radius would be kept informed about the movements of the others; and, as the number of aborigines living within that range would be small, the names of the people in each group could be estimated with a fair degree of certainty.'

Mr Mountford concludes: 'Although the last word is yet to be written on the smoke-signals of the aborigines, I am convinced that much which has been recorded about them is as exaggerated as the accounts of Indian rope-tricks, hoop-snakes, and mulga wireless.'



Thomson

P. I. KEITH MURRAY

THOMSON has done something you and I have never done. He has done something nobody in the world to-day has ever done. He has died! He is dead!

He was a tall thin man, was Thomson, and he was a pit-mechanic. He rushed around with a bag of tools and mended engines and things. He wasn't very important, just one of the staff, same as me, but I was a pit-electrician. I rushed around with a bag of tools and mended *electric* things. We were often working together down the pit, because, if he was putting a pump right, I had to disconnect the electric bits. I liked Thomson a lot.

He had been on the job for over fourteen years, hated it like hell, but kept on because, he said, that crawling about, a mile below the surface of the earth, held a fascination for him. I felt the same—at times.

Well, one day—it was a Saturday of all days—the phone goes on the surface and Old Davy on the midlift pump is heard shouting from somewhere, miles underground, that he thinks there is trouble brewing with one of his main bearings. Old Davy is always hearing things and his blasted bearings were the bane of Thomson's life. However, there was nothing for it but to go down and see. So, cursing and

swearing, Thomson collects his tools, claps on his helmet, and dumps his cigarettes and matches. Then he lights his lamp and stalks off to No. 3 shaft, which is the upcast and normally only used as an escape.

In a minute or two the wheels on top of the headgear turn slightly and stop. Then they speed up as the cage drops steadily to the bottom. That's the last of Thomson that I saw for two or three hours.

WELL, I'm just packing up my tools, ready for the hooter going, when in comes the Chief Electrician. Everybody, of course, starts banging things about and bustling around to show how busy he is, but I'm a bit slow, and the Chief singles me out. 'Hey, you,' he shouts, 'you'll have to hang on and see if anything develops on the midlift pump. Wait till Thomson phones.' Only, of course, he didn't use these exact words!

No use cursing about it, though it meant that I would miss the match at Cardiff and probably my Saturday pint as well. So, as the hooter blows and my mates clear out, I just sit down and start waiting.

While I am sitting there all by myself, surrounded with bits of coal-cutters, pump-

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motors, and pan-engines, I start thinking about this chap Thomson.

He is an odd chap in his way and I suppose getting on for sixty. Everybody likes him and he has got a way with him when dealing with kids and old ladies. I turn over in my mind, as I take a swill of cold tea from my flask, how he loves running the Old Folk's Christmas dinner and things like that. He can do silly conjuring tricks, and imitate birds and things. He even sang once at a smoking-concert, though he says his voice is like a rusty cart-wheel. He is right too! A great reader, also, is Thomson, and I have a sort of feeling, as I lean my back against a gate-end box, that he must have travelled a lot as well.

It was after I had got thinking about this far that I realised that nearly an hour had passed and that there had been no telephone-call from down below. Up I get, feeling a bit stiff and go over to the phone to call up old Davy underground.

When he answered, I couldn't hear what he was saying for a bit, his mouth was so full of bread and bad language. However, in spite of this, and the background of clanking from the pump, I eventually managed to make out two things. One was that the pump was working all right and the other was that Thomson had never turned up. I didn't give twopenceworth of damns about the pump—that belongs to the Coal Board, but I did wonder what the hell had happened to Thomson.

I rang the pumper at the shaft-bottom. Oh yes, Thomson had got down right enough and had stopped to have a chat for a minute or two. He had then gone on down the main roadway to No. 8. That was all right, because I knew he would turn off to get to the midlift pump. As required by the rules, he had told the pumper he was going there.

I waited another hour. Still no call from Old Davy, so I rang again. Pump O.K., but no Thomson.

I began to get worried now and decided I'd better go down myself and see what the hell was going on. Thomson was a friend of mine.

It was a Saturday afternoon, as I've said, and nobody about, but Sam was on the winding-engine, an antiquated contraption, as this was an old pit, used only as an escape from No. 8 in case of disaster. I went over to him. 'Look here, Sam,' I says, 'would you

mind lowering me down? I want to see what Thomson is up to.' Only, of course, I didn't use those actual words!

'Righto,' says Sam. 'I'll bring the cage up. You go over and signal when you are ready.'

Sam, of course, didn't use those actual words either; rather he chucked in a lot of others—about bloody mechanics and electricians. There was also something I couldn't catch about no steam and rotten fireman and a few other things as well. The main thing was, though, that he went over to the levers and started up the engine.

Well, over I go to the shop and put on my helmet, test my lamp, and fill my bag of tools—just in case. Out I go, and back I come, to leave my cigarettes and matches. Out I go again and walk over to the pithead, same as Thomson had done.

It's the upcast shaft and I slid back the trap to ease the pressure before wrenching open the heavy door of the air-lock. The sun was blazing overhead and there were no clouds in the sky. It'll freeze again to-night, I thought, and the door crashed shut behind me.

It was semi-dark. Daylight filtered through two grimy little windows. Wet coal-dust clung to everything. Air hissed under the bottom of the door. My ears cracked. I passed on to the second door, slid back the trap, and wrenched. Once more a heavy door thudded shut behind me. Now there was no daylight. Only the glow from a filthy electric-lamp sealed in an explosion-proof case, high on the dripping black wall.

The steady puff-puff of the steam-engine driving the huge exhausters-fans had given way to the roar of the fans themselves. I pushed open a third door and closed it. No sun now and no light save the feeble glow of my lamp in the darkness. I waited to let my eyes get accustomed to the gloom.

To the right, through the grubby guard-rail I could see the deeper blackness of the pit. Steam rose from it slowly in thin white coils. The roar of the exhausters-fans was more insistent and the air was foul. Black water on the floor rippled in little wavelets from the wind that shrieked under the door. It was hot and clammy and my overalls seemed to cling to my body.

The rusty, dripping cage hung just in front of me on a rusty chain, with a thousand feet of steam and air below it. I reached up for the triangular hold on the signal-wire, drew a breath, checked my lamp, and saw that I had

my tools. Then I signalled Sam: 'Men going down,' and walked on to the rusty floor of the small and rusty cage.

Water dripped down my neck and I shifted my semi-crouching position, for the headroom was not great. The cage moved slightly, dropped a foot, and stopped. After a pause it started downwards. The water dripped, the steam rose, and the guide-ropes smacked the guides. We gathered speed. My lamp glowed dully through the murk and the roar of the fans rose in a mighty crescendo, touched a deafening diapason, and receded again as the cage raced downwards.

Now the sound of the fans was far away and above. My stomach rose to meet my head and the black sides of the shaft in the light of the glimmering lamp seemed to stream past in the wrong direction. A swish and a hiss as the upward-going cage tore past me on its way to the surface. Sam was in a hurry to-day. I bent my knees and held on to the safety-bar as I felt the cage losing speed. I thought, as I always thought at this point, of the mess at the bottom if Sam forgot to stop! But Sam was old and experienced, and we steadily slowed. I looked through the holes in the rusty, dripping floor and saw the dim lights of the pit-bottom vaguely through the steam.

Slower and slower we got until we drifted noiselessly past the roof of the pit-bottom. Very slow—so slow—splash, and we hit gently the mud on the bottom. A vast murky cavern lit with little lamps stretched out before me until it was lost in the gloom—and somewhere in that gloom was Thomson.

I GRABBED my bag of tools and stepped out into the mud. Arthur the Pumper was there and he always liked a talk with any of the few who happened to pass. Twenty years ago the place would have been buzzing with people, but there came only mechanics, electricians, and such like now. Arthur was not lonely, though, for he watched a gigantic steam-pump, so big that three double-storey council houses would hardly hold it. He loved this machine buried a thousand feet below the ground.

'Any news of Thomson?' I asked.

'None,' says Arthur.

'All right, I'll get on,' I said. 'I'm going to find him. I'll ring you from the midlift pump.'

This was an old part of the pit and the new workings were fully four miles away. The half-gale that blew was loaded with the dust and odours it had drawn from workings, galleries, and tunnels, covering the area of a good-sized town. The roof was pretty low and the pavement was slippery ooze.

I banged my helmet more firmly on my head and, with my steel-toed boots catching in rails and disused ropes, bent my back slightly to dodge a projecting rock.

As I stumbled on I thought of Thomson, for to him I owed much of my early training. I remembered asking him once what the tiny white tracks were in the coal-dust beside the road we travelled. His reply was simple. 'Bloody mice,' he said.

I remembered Jackie, the rat he used to feed and the trouble he got into for doing it.

One day as we took a breather just inside an entry, he pointed with a screwdriver at a worm that was wriggling through a gloomy little mound of filth at our feet. 'I wonder if it thinks it's above the ground,' he said. I still wonder myself.

Another time he suddenly turned from a pump-gland he was tightening and said that millions of years ago the sun had shone on the place where he was standing now. Then he went on tightening the gland.

I slithered on, slipping in the ooze, banging my head on the roof, and sometimes scraping the skin off my spine. Thomson said a coal-pit has fascination. Maybe it has—for Thomson!

ANYWAY, after a bit I turned into a side-entry for a rest and to get out of the cold wind which smelt of explosives. I sat for a minute or two and then I couldn't help going in a little further. I'd been there before quite a number of times. You see, I like animals and, twenty years ago, before the miners had driven on, and machinery come in, the ponies used to pass this way as they went to the stables.

I often looked at the stables. I looked at them again to-day. In the glimmer of my little lamp, how empty they looked. And yet—not empty. There was not much dust about; the air did not go through that way now. The floor was quite clean. It was very hot and stuffy.

In the first stall there was a bucket; quite clean, too, with a hole in it, and there were a

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few bits of straw in the manger. I swept my lamp around. It was very, very quiet. It was the silence of the grave that seemed to hang about me. An odd bit of rusty chain hung on a nail and a half-hairless brush and tin stood neatly on a shelf. I moved along the row of stalls almost on tiptoe. One must not wake the ponies. A cover of some kind, very old and worn, lay tidily over the division between two stalls. A battered halter hung awry upon a hook.

The silence was utter and when I turned off my little lamp the darkness sank like oil about me. Twenty million years ago the sun shone where now I stood. I turned on the lamp again and swept it slowly round. Something seemed to be missing. I turned off the light again. Everything appeared to be here, I thought, and yet not *everything*. I shrugged, and again turned on my little light. As I did so, I saw it! Right at the far end of the row of stalls lay a bag of tools! Thomson's bag of tools!

I walked to it. I knew now, just as you do, what was missing—and also what had drawn Thomson away from the midlift pump.

I crossed the barrier at the far end of the stalls, with a full knowledge of my sheer foolishness. Into the old workings I went, looking for *two* missing things now—and but *one* was Thomson!

Maybe my foot was the first that had trod for thirty years in these forgotten caverns. The air was foul and stinking and the roof was rough and loose. Great fungi grew on the rotting wood-supports, twisted and broken as they were with the weight of rock above them. White puff-balls wobbled grotesquely as they hung, a yard long, from projecting bits of rock. Everywhere was slime and dripping wet.

The tiny beam of my lamp swept the roadway ahead. It showed nothing but rotten decay. A rusty broken cogwheel lay on its side, and a twisting length of rope, like a giant tapeworm, writhed in and out of rocks. Further on I came upon one old boot, and, as I crawled, my fingers felt an old cloth cap. A battered bogie lay, wheelless, on its side. I passed a broken pick and a few old tins, and always, grotesquely wobbling in the gentle breeze of my passage, hung those white puff-balls which live nowhere but here. They disappear if brought to the sunlight.

All about was the stench of dry-rot and I found it almost impossible to breathe. The

roof was rotten and I felt, as I looked fearfully upwards, that I could see the foundations of the houses a thousand feet above.

I stopped for a moment and listened. The sullen stillness was deep as the silence of the tomb, and made the deeper by the intermittent click of falling slivers of stone and, every now and then, by a tiny splash made by a drop of water.

It seemed that I heard the rock-walls about me creak and groan from the appalling weight they supported. I remembered how, in some of the workings, the floor was squeezed upwards to meet the roof and in the course of time the gallery would close up like a rubber tube beneath your foot. I cursed myself for the fool I was.

As I lay on my stomach among the debris in the glow from my little electric-lamp, I thought of all this, and I thought of Thomson too. I marvelled at the foolishness of man, driven to take a risk like this in the hope of finding a souvenir of a subterranean stable.

It was then, also, that I thought of the gas! Not the explosive firedamp, from which the danger was small, but the heavy, deadly carbon monoxide that might lie upon the floor.

I had been away a long time. Perhaps Davy on the pump had phoned the surface to say I had not arrived. Perhaps they would come to look for me, and there would be rescue-parties, and they would find my bag of tools and Thomson's bag of tools, and they would bring breathing-apparatus along and canaries in cages. Perhaps they would find me, if the roof held up, and the canaries would fall from their perches dead, and the rescue-party would shake their heads and say the gas was pretty thick.

When I got to that point, I judged it was about time I gave up thinking and got on with the job. It doesn't do any good thinking that sort of stuff in a pit. Cautiously I crawled along a surface like the bed of a mountain-stream.

A few yards ahead—you can't see far with the equivalent of half a car sidelight—I saw what appeared as a complete block in the roadway. As I neared it, I found that a great fall had occurred and, as I crawled up and over it, there yawned above my head a vast arch, vaulted, like a Cathedral nave. There was dust about, and this could mean but one thing. The fall was comparatively new. Had Thomson caused it? Where was Thomson?

Upon the last question there was little doubt

in my mind. But I must make sure, so I crawled on and down the other side. Quite suddenly, on the edge of the heap of rock, my light fell on something that glinted. I looked closer. Protruding from the pile of stone which once had been the roof was the steel toecap of a miner's boot. From under a gigantic boulder came the wire to a miner's lamp. It was thus that I found Thomson. A few feet away, as if he had flung it from him, lay the thing that Thomson sought!

There was nothing that I could do. No

object in even trying to move those monstrous stones. Thomson was dead—no doubt about that.

Some days later we sealed off that roadway, for the roof was bad and the gas was thick. We left Thomson there beneath the cairn of stones—a thousand feet beneath the ground, where once the sun had shone.

I get all the rotten jobs now because the Chief says, though he did not use these words, that there is no future in looking for horse-shoes when you should be mending pumps.

Peat-Fire Memories

XIV.—Wakes and Funerals

KENNETH MACDONALD

WAKES are still common in the Isles, and the body is kept in the house for three days or more. The period is seldom over three days unless some relative has to travel a long distance to attend the funeral.

Highland people feel under an obligation to attend the funeral of relatives, and relationship in the Isles means something more than simply brothers or sisters. Yes, it goes back into the third and fourth generation. The relatives gather from far and wide, and, if they have come a long distance, they remain with the bereaved until the burial has taken place.

Highland people are also very superstitious and they fear the supernatural. They are very psychic, too, and many villages have their own seers; these hear strange noises and see strange visions.

On death, the body lies for the first day or two at the side of the room on a board and trestles covered with white sheets down to the ground. In my young days the trestles were usually two barrels borrowed from neighbours and the board an old barn-door. When

draped with the white sheets, the barrels and door were not visible and they served to all appearance just like the modern undertaker's trestles.

The crofters from whom the barrels and the barn-door were borrowed could tell beforehand that they were to be used for such a purpose, for from the barn they had heard strange, unusual, eerie sounds from both, and the lady from whom the sheets were borrowed had heard the cist open and shut during the night. Even the gravedigger could tell when a death was nigh, for the spades in his little shed rattled and moved about during the night.

The face of the corpse was covered over with a white cloth. Pictures and mirrors were taken down or covered or turned against the wall. The clock was stopped and people moved silently about the room; hardly a word was spoken and the silence was broken only by an occasional sigh.

Once I saw a saucer of coarse salt lying on the abdomen of the dead one. I was told it was to keep away evil spirits, while

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another story said it was to absorb any offensive odours from the body.

THERE is no record, to my knowledge, of professional chanters or mourners being used in the Highlands and in the Isles as is done in Eastern lands, but I have seen on two occasions a female relative take on the chanting role.

On the first occasion, the woman was dressed in black and sat on a low stool near the fire. She rocked backwards and forwards, patting her hands on her knees, or sliding them back and forth on her legs. The chanting was in a monotone and just loud enough for all present to hear. The lament seemed to follow the *Oran Mor* type of Gaelic singing and was mournful like Gaelic psalm-singing. The subject-matter of the dirge was in praise of the deceased and was simply anything at all. One line I remember was: 'You bought a new suit and you never used it.' This was uttered in a monotone and rose to a crescendo.

On the other occasion, the woman sat on a heap of straw near the fire, which was in the middle of the floor. She also rocked backwards and forwards and appeared to be in great distress; pain and grief were apparent in every word. When she moved about the house she did not stand erect, but proceeded slowly in a half-bent position. Only on these two occasions have I heard the chanting, although I attended on an average six or more wakes and funerals a year for about thirty years.

These customs probably linger still in the more remote corners of the Isles, but in most parts wakes close now at midnight. I remember the first house in my own village of Sandwick that broke away from the old tradition of all-night wakes. The breach was the main topic of discussion for a long time after and the perpetrators were referred to as barbarians and infidels. It was thought hard-hearted and unchristianlike.

PEOPLE gather from all the surrounding villages to the wake. In the old black house both rooms were full of people and a service was conducted by a deacon or elder of the church to which the deceased belonged. Although people of all denominations attend the wake, only office-bearers of the dead person's church conduct the service. The

services go on until about midnight, when most of those present return home. Those who intend sitting all night then begin to arrive. Some conversation is carried on during the night, but usually it is not sustained, as the whole atmosphere is subdued.

Tea and biscuits are served, and very rarely have I seen any liquor being proffered, and emphatically no excess of liquor, in spite of references to the contrary made by my friend and village neighbour Mr Alasdair Alpin Macgregor in his recent book. Never during my forty-eight years' residence in the Isles have I seen one drop of liquor at any funeral.

The wake goes on until the day of the funeral, usually about three days. On that day a morning service is held, as nearly all funerals in Lewis take place at 2 p.m. The previous day two boys are sent round the village to tell the people that the funeral is at two o'clock the next day. Boys of ten or twelve years of age loved this job, as it carried something of importance. The messengers were hardly necessary as everybody already knew that the mourner James or Norman had arrived the night before by the boat and that the funeral would be next day.

AN hour or so before the hour of departure people gather from the various districts, dressed in their bowler or soft hats, black tie, and long black coats. They linger around the sheltered end of a peatstack or at the end of the house until the appointed hour.

Two pairs of chairs facing each other and about six feet apart are placed on the road and the bier is set down with its ends resting on the chairs.

The bearer or the bier was always kept in an old quarry outside the village. Nobody would keep it at home, as it was associated with the dead, and nobody wished to see it hopping around at midnight on its two lanky wooden legs. It was fetched the day before the funeral and lay against the back of the house.

The coffin is carried out by the chief-mourners and laid on the bier feet first. Groups of children peer half-hidden at the proceedings. The men line up in twos behind the bier. The weight is taken off the chairs, and they are put to one side. The procession moves on with a slow, steady, rhythmic step. The women gather to the door and the weeping and lamentations slowly fade as the cortege moves on.

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The bier is shaped like a wide ladder about 12 feet long, with four handles or gripping places on each side. Thus eight people are carrying at the one time. The rest of the mourners form up in couples behind, and a funeral is usually attended by from fifty to a hundred people. The chief-mourners hold a tassel each, one at each end. They do not carry the bier.

The file of couples widens out at the rear of the bier and moves up on each side until the first two are abreast of the leading couple at the bier. After about twenty paces the first two of the couples who have come up relieve the leaders at the bier, who then fall back to handle number 2, while those at 2 in turn fall back to 3, and those at 3 to 4. The couple at 4 fall out, one on each side, stand, back to cortege, until the procession passes them, and join up at the rear. Sometimes, according to the distance from the cemetery, each couple will have quite a few carrying turns.

At the graveside the tassels are undone and

the coffin is let slowly down by the chief-mourners. All heads are now bared and a prayer is offered. Some Highland churches do not approve of graveside prayers. Can there be a more impressive moment for a prayer than beside an open grave?

Lewis graveyards in the main are on machair land, and I can visualise at the moment the cemetery at Eye in Point district, where many Macleod chiefs are buried. Here is the perfect place for interment—the sand over ten feet deep, the grave clean-cut. It is comforting to those who remain to know that the body of the loved one is in such a beautiful resting-place, undefiled by clay soil or even by a pebble. The graves for the most part lie east and west, with the head to the west, a custom probably coming down from very ancient times. When the great trumpet sounds on the Day of Judgment and the graves open, the faces of the dead will be to the East, towards the rising sun, where the glory of God will manifest itself.

Outrageous Incident at Bonn

JOHN WILLIAMS

NINETY years ago, in the early days of popular travel, the British were still discovering the Continent, and thousands of them were crossing the Channel and enthusiastically sampling the delights of Europe for the first time. But, though the new business they brought with them was welcome to their hosts, they themselves were, it must be regretfully admitted, not always appreciated.

The trouble was that some of these unpractised tourists, ranging rather wildly round the Continental resorts, ignored the maxim 'When in Rome—,' thereby offending the inhabitants and giving British travellers in general a bad name. Because of this, there were sometimes awkward incidents, and some-

times perfectly well-behaved Britons found themselves in undeserved difficulties.

Such episodes were just part of the growing-pains of organised tourism and at the worst had but trivial repercussions—all except one, the sensational case of Captain Macdonald, which caused a furore in England and Prussia in the autumn of 1860.

Arrested at Bonn on a charge of assault, imprisoned without trial and then fined, the unlucky Macdonald became for a time an international figure. Prussian papers vilified him, *The Times* thundered on his behalf, Palmerston championed him in the House of Commons, Queen Victoria was moved to comment on his case, and he was the subject

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of brusque diplomatic exchanges between Britain and Prussia. It was a year before he was allowed to retire into a welcome obscurity.

ON 12th September 1860 Captain Macdonald, a retired army officer and member of the Queen's household, was travelling from Mainz to Cologne with two relatives, a small child, and a nurse. When the train stopped at Bonn two of the party got out for refreshments, and during their absence a German couple entered the carriage.

This pair, a Dr Parow and his wife, roughly pushed aside the belongings of Macdonald's two absent travelling-companions and sat down in their places. Macdonald politely pointed out what he assumed was their mistake, possibly touching Frau Parow on the shoulder as he did so. In return, Dr Parow was violently abusive, accusing Macdonald of assaulting his wife, calling him a lout, and summoning the station-master, who ordered Macdonald out of the carriage.

Refusing to go, he was dragged from the train by the heels and locked up without being allowed the bail that was offered by the hastily-summoned British consul. After six days in a dirty cell he was tried, and, though he was acquitted of the charge of assaulting Frau Parow, he was convicted of insulting the station-master and fined twenty thalers.

DURING Macdonald's trial the prosecuting counsel, Procurator Moller, made some highly offensive remarks about English tourists in Germany. This produced from the resentful English residents of Bonn a protest, signed by the British chaplain and ten others, which appeared in the Bonn and Cologne papers and began as follows: 'We the undersigned English inhabitants of Bonn beg to protest against the assertion made by the Staats-Procurator Moller on Tuesday the 17th last during the public sittings of the police-court that the English residing and travelling on the Continent were notorious for the rudeness, impudence, and blackguardism of their conduct.'

Moller was officially reprimanded for his outburst, but this did not prevent him from taking action for libel against the signatories of the letter.

Meanwhile, in England, *The Times* was preparing to champion the cause of both

Macdonald and the Bonn residents. On 24th September it published prominently a long letter from an Englishman in Germany describing the whole affair. Next day it printed a lengthy leader forcibly protesting against Macdonald's arrest and trial; and, on another page, it gave the Bonn residents' letter.

The affair simmered for a time. Then, in October, fresh fuel was added by a violent diatribe against the behaviour of British tourists in Germany, including Captain Macdonald, that appeared in the *National Zeitung*. That same month—headed by the words: 'The *National Zeitung* remarks with regard to the atrocity committed by Prussian officials at Bonn'—the diatribe was reproduced in *The Times*.

These grave aspersions on the conduct of Britons abroad now called forth a reply from the central figure in the drama, the aggrieved Captain Macdonald himself. Readers of *The Times* opened their papers the following day, 24th October, to read a letter from him. It ran:

'Sir,

'The short extract from the *National Zeitung* in *The Times* of to-day contains an assertion that I, the unhappy English traveller, molested a female passenger at Bonn. Although it evinces the total ignorance the Germans possess of an Englishman's habits, I cannot allow this statement to pass without giving it the strongest and most indignant denial.

'I remain, Sir, your most obedient servant,
G. V. Macdonald, late Captain,
19th Regiment.'

'The unhappy English traveller' himself having spoken, there the matter rested for some weeks, and excitement seemed to die down a little pending the hearing of the libel case against the Bonn residents. Then, on 25th December, the result of the case appeared in *The Times*. Four were found guilty, one being fined 100 thalers, with the option of five weeks' imprisonment, and the other three being fined twenty-five thalers, with the option of nine days.

Indignation mounted again, and the Boxing Day issue of *The Times* had a long editorial tirade against Prussian justice in general and the Procurator Moller in particular. Returning to Macdonald's case, the leader supported his version of the affair that any touching of Frau Parow—the action that had

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started the trouble—had been merely to point out to her that the seats were taken, and that he had been morally justified in refusing to leave the carriage.

It also suggested that Parow had helped to secure an unjust conviction by inducing a lady who might have testified in Macdonald's favour to stay away from court; and it accused Moller of keeping Macdonald in a dirty cell for six days when the case ought to have been settled in forty-eight hours. Finally, the leader broached the possibility of demanding compensation for the captain's treatment.

Meanwhile Queen Victoria had taken note of the affair. In October 1860, during a visit of hers to Germany, her Foreign Minister, Lord John Russell, who was with her, spent some time discussing it at Coblenz with the German Minister, but without reaching a settlement. And while the Queen discreetly avoided any open expression of her own views, she did go as far as to say that 'although foreign governments are often violent and arbitrary, our people are apt to give offence and pay no regard to the laws of the country.'

THE case rumbled on into 1861. It was discussed in the clubs; it was bandied to and fro in diplomatic correspondence; it was even raised in Parliament. At question time on 26th April, M.P.s heard Lord Robert Cecil ask to know, in the light of the captain's experiences at Bonn, 'precisely the amount of protection which Englishmen were to expect from their own Government in case of need, and the amount of oppression which they would have to bear from foreign Governments when unfortunate enough to fall into their hands.'

After a scathing attack on Prussian methods of justice, Lord Robert quoted the following pronouncement of the Foreign Minister, who had taken up the matter energetically: 'The Prussian Government has not thought fit to temper its justification of these extreme acts by any expression of regret, and Her Majesty's Government cannot but regard its conduct as too clearly evincing a disregard of international goodwill.'

Another Member spoke in support and then Lord Palmerston, Prime Minister, rose to confirm the Foreign Minister's strong condemnation of the Prussians, castigating their actions as 'of a most unfriendly character, and most

unworthy of a Government in alliance with England.'

This was the country's official view and obviously the popular one, even though one M.P., who said that he thought Macdonald's punishment very lenient and the Prussian action justified, did not share it. And as the Crown's law-officers advised that legally there was no redress to be had from the Prussian Government, there the matter unsatisfactorily rested.

IT was perhaps understandable that these governmental strictures—and equally the Press attacks—on Prussia, that stemmed from the Macdonald affair, were hardly relished by Queen Victoria and the Prince. In October 1861 the Queen expressed her resentment of the anti-Prussian attitude of *The Times* in a letter to Lord Palmerston. 'The Queen,' she wrote, 'has long seen with deep regret the persevering efforts made by *The Times*, which leads the rest of our Press, in attacking, vilifying, and abusing everything German, and particularly everything Prussian. That journal had since years shown the same bias, but it is since the Macdonald affair of last year that it has assumed that tone of virulence, which could not fail to produce the deepest indignation amongst the people of Germany, and by degrees estrange the feelings of the people of this country against Germany.' And she went on to ask Palmerston to persuade Delane, editor of *The Times*, to modify his paper's attacks on Germany.

Palmerston passed the Queen's request to Delane, who replied to him: 'I shall be very glad to give the Prussians a respite from the most cruel of all inflictions—good advice.' Palmerston then wrote informing the Queen that he had carried out her wishes and reminding her, most respectfully, that British newspapers differed from most Continental ones in not being under political control.

But here the issue begins to stray far from the personal misfortunes of a British traveller at Bonn, and here it is best to leave it. The unhappy case of Captain Macdonald soon faded into oblivion and Anglo-Prussian relations suffered no rupture on account of it. And it was not long before British tourists, adapting themselves to Continental ways and learning to respect the susceptibilities of foreigners, became welcome guests everywhere in Europe.



A Flying Shark

G. VILLIERS

A FEELING of gloom had descended on the officers and ship's companies of the ships comprising one of H.M. Far Eastern squadrons and not unnaturally this was particularly noticeable in the wardroom of the flagship. That very morning we had seen our popular C-in-C. sail for England on completion of his tenure of command, during which we had learned to regard him with feelings of respect for his outstanding qualities as an Admiral and of affection for his human and sympathetic administration.

As an example of the latter may be cited his much appreciated custom of placing at the disposal of the officers of the Squadron for restricted periods both A.M. and P.M. the use of the tennis-courts and bathing-pool at Admiralty House.

If possible, the use of the bathing-pool was appreciated even more than that of the tennis-courts, because in the shark-infested waters of the harbour bathing over the side was strictly forbidden.

I am not suggesting that on occasions during the hours of darkness some sweat-laden body would not let itself down quietly for a refreshing dip, but its owner only did so in the full knowledge that if discovered he was for the high jump, even if he escaped unharmed from the voracious sharks.

Our gloom was turned to despondency when the new C-in-C. issued the following signal to his command within forty-eight hours of taking over: 'In future the use of the tennis-courts and bathing-pool at Admiralty House will be confined to the C-in-C. and his guests.' Apart from the somewhat curt wording of the signal, it was generally felt that the C-in-C. could have had no evidence in such a short time that either he or his guests would be in the least inconvenienced by the previous arrangement, and it will be noted that no reasons were advanced for withdrawing the much-prized privileges. Further, it soon became clear that the new C-in-C. and his guests were not making anything like as much use of either tennis-courts or swimming-pool as was formerly the case.

SOME weeks later, on a hot sultry Sunday afternoon, a boat was seen to leave the flagship and head out of the harbour, manned by the usual quota of wardroom officers who had taken the opportunity of serving on this station to become keen deep-sea fishermen. Their trophies included most of the finny tribe abounding in those seas and it was a rare occasion for them to return empty-handed. But on this particular afternoon

A FLYING SHARK

Dame Fortune withheld her smiles and when, somewhere around four o'clock, someone suggested packing up and heading for a small bay where bathing was reasonably safe, it is probable that the suggestion would have been adopted had not something happened—and when things happen in deep-sea fishing, they are apt to happen quickly.

Suddenly the boat was being towed in directions over which the occupants had no sort of control, and it was clear that they were engaged in battle with a denizen of the deep of no mean size; but the tackle held, and within twenty minutes or so the occupants had once more resumed the initiative, and as the monster now began to tire it was not long before the fight was over and a first-class specimen of a shark was brought alongside and trussed, and preparations made to hoist it in-board and administer the *coup de grâce*.

'Why,' said one of the officers, 'go to all this bother out here? Why not tow the brute back into harbour? It's all trussed up and we can kill it onshore much easier than in the stern-sheets. All we have to do is to land it at the pier.' This appealed to his brother-officers, and the boat's head was accordingly turned towards the harbour.

Not many minutes later the same conspirator said in a quiet but perfectly even voice: 'Having got the brute into harbour, why kill it at all?'

'What do you propose to do with it?' countered the others. 'Keep it on board as a pet?'

'Well, no, not exactly, but I think it might be kept as a pet all the same.'

'And who by?'

'By the C.-in-C., of course, since he has a ready-made swimming-pool prepared to receive it.'

It is quite impossible to describe the mixture of guttural noises with which this direful suggestion was received. Suffice it to say that in less than no time the conspirators had carried the resolution *nem. con.*, and immediately proceeded to plan the operation, with possibly an occasional thought as to the effect on their future careers if found out, but certainly with no thought as to the physical danger incurred in manhandling an infuriated trussed-up shark, which would have to be untrussed and lifted bodily into the swimming-pool. The only point not decided at the moment was who was to have the duty of untrussing the beast before consigning him to

the swimming-pool. By common consent this problem was left over for decision on the spot.

IT was clear that the whole operation would have to be carried out under cover of night, and speed was accordingly reduced. Half-an-hour after dark the boat drew alongside the pier and was firmly secured. The swimming-pool was tidal and its seaward end lay quite close to the pier; further, this seaward end was protected by strong meshed netting to prevent the possibility of any kind of fish from entering the pool. It was decided to manhandle the shark over the pier and deposit it into the pool over the seaward end.

I will draw a veil over the ensuing twenty minutes' struggle, with its softly-spoken quota of nautical oaths, as this ticklish task approached completion. The climax came when the moment for untrussing arrived, and one for which the shark had obviously been waiting. With the utmost impartiality, it proceeded to threaten mutilation to whoever finally freed its jaws. With a vicious snap it so nearly succeeded in biting off both hands of the untrusser that the latter hastily withdrew them—so hastily that the remaining three conspirators were quite unable to adjust themselves to the new position of the shark's centre of gravity. Luckily for all concerned, the shark was also unable to adjust its balance in time, and with a resounding flop it toppled over the edge of the pool and disappeared beneath the surface.

In due course four weary officers brought the boat back to the flagship and in response to many inquiries as to why they were so late, having caught nothing, they maintained a dignified but very firm silence.

THE next day, Monday, broke calm and serene. The C.-in-C. was entertaining a house-party for the week-end to meet a rather portly and pompous V.I.P. At breakfast the flag-lieutenant discussed ways and means of entertaining the guests, as a result of which the following programme was agreed: A.M.—Go as you please; P.M.—Tennis, followed by bathing by those who wished. All went well until lunch-time.

Tennis started at three o'clock, and the fact of this unusual activity on the courts was not lost upon certain officers in the flagship.

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Things might be beginning to look up; they undoubtedly were, but not quite in the way imagined by these officers.

Shortly after four o'clock the C-in-C's guests decided that they had had sufficient exercise, and to Flag's suggestion that now was the moment to enjoy a bathe and then tea there was unanimous assent, and in a few minutes, to the consternation of the conspirators who were now armed with binoculars, the party was seen to re-emerge from the house in bathing-costumes. The V.I.P., in fact, could scarcely restrain himself and, running on ahead of the others, proceeded to hurl himself into the swimming-pool with much gusto.

Unfortunately, the spot chosen for his entry was within easy reach of the position in the pool occupied at that moment by a shark infuriated by the treatment to which it had been subjected during the last twenty-four hours, and thirsting for blood. It sprang to life in an instant, fully resolved to tear the limbs from the intruder. Luckily for the V.I.P., however, the remaining guests had by this time reached the pool. Warned by the shouts of the men and the screams of the women, the V.I.P. also sprang into action. If his entry into the pool had been hasty, his exit was positively headlong—and only just in time, for as willing helpers pulled him over the side of the pool a vicious snap of the shark's cruel jaws only missed one of the V.I.P.'s feet by a matter of inches.

IN the meantime the noise of the commotion had penetrated the portals of Admiralty House and the C-in-C. came out to learn what it was all about. He just couldn't believe the story, and insisted on looking into the bathing-pool himself. There was no further room for doubt; in plain view of all the shark was to be seen swimming round the pool as if on sentry-go, and determined to let no other intruder invade his privacy.

The C-in-C. now took charge of operations. His first step was to place the swimming-pool out of bounds to all and sundry until further notice. Then the flagship was instructed to send divers in relays so as to work continuously at the seaward end of the pool until they had discovered how the shark had effected entry; following which the carpenters and plumbers and their mates from the entire Squadron were to make such alterations or repairs or both as would prevent even the possibility of a recurrence of such a happening.

Within twenty-four hours the divers were able to report that there wasn't a hole in the wire-netting large enough for even a small fish to get through anywhere. But clearly things—including presumably the shark—could not be left where they were, and the Chief of the Staff was not in the least surprised on receiving instructions to 'carry out a strict investigation into the known facts and to report how the shark had been able to enter the pool, together with recommendations to prevent the possibility of a recurrence.'

At the end of forty-eight hours, the Chief of the Staff could only suggest that:

A. The shark had gained entry either *through* the seaward end or *over* the seaward end.

B. Since the diver's report ruled out the former, unquestionably the shark must have entered *over* the seaward end, but whether by jumping or flying he preferred not to hazard an opinion.

Meanwhile the shark had resumed his undisturbed tenancy of his new domain, little dreaming of the lack of competition to dispute it with him. But his days were numbered.

History does not relate whether the C-in-C. inclined to the view of a jumping shark or a flying shark, because he confined himself to ordering the immediate destruction of the shark and the cleansing of the pool, but to this day that particular shark is referred to on the station as the Flying Shark.

Illusion

*I built myself a house of fantasy,
Just as a child will do, absorbed in play.
There did I live, regardless of the past,
With curtains drawn against oncoming day.*

*Imagination, waiting on my needs,
Made all my failures easy to redeem.
It seemed I had success within my grasp,
Only to wake and find it was a dream.*

VIVIAN HENDERSON.

The Curse of Polluted Air

LANGSTON DAY

THERE is no doubt that we are at last waking up to the dangers of polluted air. With memories of the Great Smog of last winter, which killed 4000 Londoners in a single week, the London Medical Association have suggested that we wear home-made smoke-masks. At least fifteen local authorities have now got powers to establish smokeless zones, while some towns, such as Manchester and Coventry which have smokeless zones already, are thinking of enlarging them. The London City Corporation is seeking powers to make the whole of the City of London a smokeless region. In fact, this idea of smokeless zones, which was invented by a Manchester barrister, seems to be catching on.

Poisoned air has, of course, been with us for centuries. As long ago as 1257 the smoke of Nottingham was so bad that Queen Eleanor, who was staying there while Henry III led an expedition into Wales, found she could not bear it and moved to Tutbury. Fifty years later a Royal Proclamation forbade artificers to use coal in their furnaces and ordered them to return the fuel they were using. One offender was actually put to death! But in spite of dire threats and penalties the smoke nuisance became no better, and with the advent of the Industrial Revolution it grew very much worse.

Here and there voices were raised against smoke, some of them in almost Miltonic prose. One of the most famous diatribes is John Evelyn's *Fumifugium* addressed to King Charles II. Strange to relate, among Evelyn's severest opponents were the College of Physicians, who believed that smoke was a natural preventive against infections!

But a couple of centuries later doctors held the view that diseases were conveyed by an evil emanation known as 'miasma,' which was a blood brother of atmospheric pollution. The cholera epidemic of 1848-9 inspired Dr

Neil Arnott and Chadwick with ambitions to float a Pure Air Company which would operate under the trade-name of 'Ventilation from Cloudland.' Air would be drawn by machinery from the upper reaches of the atmosphere and piped into great towns. Special collecting-towers would be built, and for a subscription of a few shillings a year urban dwellers would be able to enjoy the benefits of air excelling that of the country.

In the early days of the Industrial Revolution smoke was almost considered as synonymous with prosperity and personal enterprise, and anyone who complained about it was not only dubbed a crank but considered an enemy of individual liberty as well. As to the unhappy sufferers from smoke, they were sunk in the dull gloom of acquiescence. A Chief Medical Officer of Health wrote in 1889: 'The immense masses of the population endure without revolt or struggle the extremities of general Smoke Nuisance . . . hardly murmuring in their self-imposed eclipse.'

This fatalism persists to this day. There is nothing dramatic in tens of thousands of people becoming ill from breathing poisoned air, and so the matter is seldom written up in the Press. The East Coast floods and even the Lynmouth disaster caused far more of a sensation than did the Great Smog in London in December 1952. As an aerial photographer wrote after twenty years of sky journeying: 'Although I have flown day after day over towns in the Midlands, seeing little of them but their canopies of smoke, I find that more incredible than the smoke is the complete indifference of their inhabitants to the injury inflicted on them by its presence.'

A FEW facts and figures will show the power and malevolence of the Smoke Fiend. Every year the air of Great Britain is

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polluted with about 2½ million tons of smoke, 570,000 tons of grit, and 5 million tons of sulphur dioxide, not to mention smaller quantities of other impurities. Rather less than half of these pollutants are extremely small particles, which may measure only a 20-millionth of an inch, and unhappily our respiratory system is quite unable to filter them out.

In Leeds as many as 2000 of these tiny particles have been measured in a cubic inch of air. In the Hunslet district of the city no less than 540 tons of filth fall each year on one square mile. Tests made with hollyhocks and aucubas in Leeds show that soot, grit, and sulphuric acid almost kill these plants, depriving them of their flowers and destroying their capacity for germination.

The effect of polluted air on human health is also very serious, though just how serious and in what respects is a debated question. Many medical authorities could be quoted to show that air pollution kills off pulmonary and cardiac cases, produces tuberculosis and rickets by shutting out the sunlight—half the sunlight in the case of Manchester—and even increases cancer of the lung. Doctors find it incongruous that we should spend about £450 millions a year on the National Health Service and yet leave the air loaded with grit and sulphur. In drugs, medical attendance, and loss of man-hours the costs are millions of pounds a year.

In many other ways the cost of polluted air is so great that it is hard to accept the figures. Terrible damage has already been done to the stonework of Westminster Abbey, York Minster, and many other famous buildings. Metals are corroded and fabrics destroyed. In the Smog of December 1952 one London shop alone lost about £1000 in the destruction of fabrics. Art treasures suffer very severely. When Sir William Burrell presented Glasgow with a priceless collection of pictures, tapestries, and other works of art, he stipulated that they should not be housed within 10 miles of the city, because of the damage they would suffer from polluted air. Later, he left £250,000 towards building a gallery to house them, not less than 13 miles from Glasgow Royal Exchange.

If everything is taken into account, such as the cost to human and animal health, destruction of property, loss of man-hours, dislocation of traffic, and waste of unburned coal, the bill assumes astronomical proportions. A

recent article in *The Times* assessed it at £150 millions a year, which means approximately £3 for every man, woman, and child in the Kingdom.

Worst of all, perhaps, is the psychological effect. This is known and recognised where ordinary slums are concerned, but the effects of aerial slums are something which has not yet penetrated our consciousness. In really smoky towns most housewives give up the unequal struggle and accept soot and grit as a necessary evil; but as a doctor said recently: 'Physical dirt is closely related to moral dirt, and both lead to degeneracy.' The minority of women who refuse to give in are condemned to the tortures of Sisyphus.

SHERLOCK HOLMES readers may remember how often the redoubtable pair of investigators were enveloped in a pea-souper. In the 'eighties and 'nineties pollution of the air became so bad that it forced some remedial action. Things were beginning to get a little better when the Second World War broke out and manufacturers were encouraged to make as much smoke as possible to blanket Great Britain from the Luftwaffe. The effect of this official policy persists to this day. As the Romans used to say: 'Easy is the descent to hell.' However, the War bequeathed to us something on the credit side—a smoke eliminator which was invented to help our merchantmen get rid of their tell-tale smoke. This is now being used in many industrial furnaces.

Most of the experts agree that if we were to put all the users of coal in the dock, with the giant modern plants at one end, grading down to Mr and Mrs Everyman and their home fire at the other end, then the heaviest sentences would be given to the little people. The really big plants use the most up-to-date devices which science can provide. Our newest power-stations, for instance, have brought combustion to such a point that there is hardly any smoke at all. Dust is removed by grit extractors and electrostatic precipitators, while, if there is a plentiful supply of hard water near by, the sulphur is scrubbed out. As a final precaution the chimneys of power-stations are made at least 300 feet high.

At the other end of the scale, Mr and Mrs Everyman living at *Mon Repos* blacken the air with about 1½ million tons of smoke, 140,000 tons of grit, and about a million tons of sulphur. You and I, living at home, are the chief

THE CURSE OF POLLUTED AIR

culprits, and because no Government would dare to deprive us of our open coal-fires the problem is a very difficult one indeed.

Sometimes the bluff and breezy example of some man of character can do wonders. In November 1953 Dr John Douglas, Bradford's M.O.H., issued a report showing that about 1000 acres of the city are now smokeless. As new estates were built, the Council persuaded the tenants to burn only smokeless fuel. When some of them complained that they preferred coal and that coke gave off fumes, Dr Douglas growled: 'Rubbish! Go home and take out all those pieces of newspaper you have stuffed into the cracks and crannies. It's that which is causing the stuffiness.' Although officially there is no smokeless zone in Bradford, it has actually the biggest clean area of any industrial town in Great Britain.

Unfortunately measures of this kind could not be resorted to all over the Kingdom, or even over a large fraction of it, because there would not be enough smokeless fuel to go round. A survey of the next 20,000 million tons of coal likely to be mined shows only about 5 per cent of smokeless fuels. Quality is on the down-grade. While commission after commission deliberates and issues reports, our home fires continue to blacken the air, and to make matters worse Mr and Mrs Everyman are encouraged to burn top-level smoke-producers such as nutty slacks!

There has been a good deal of improvement during the last ten years in the Potteries where the old type of bottle-kiln is being replaced by electrically-fired tunnel-kilns or gas-fired kilns. Before the War about a million tons of coal were being used each year in the Potteries, but now only about 400,000 tons. On the other hand, another source of pollution is coming into prominence—the diesel oil-engine.

Dr Albert Parker, Director of Government

Fuel Research, said in October of last year that smoke from road transport, especially from diesel engines, was becoming a positive danger to traffic, and Professor G. R. Clemo in an address to the British Association in September complained about the black smoke issuing from hundreds of buses and lorries on the road between Hexham and Newcastle.

At the same time science is discovering that the pollutants have a much bigger range than was at first imagined—that they include poisonous carbon monoxide from petrol-engines, micro-organisms, aerosols, and even radio-active ionisations.

WHAT is to be done about it all? During the War, airfields were cleared of fog by the so-called FIDO system, in which petrol-burners were lit around the airfield to make a hole in the mist. In America fog has been dispersed from aerodromes by sprinkling calcium chloride from low-flying aircraft. This soaks up the moisture from the fog like blotting-paper. In another case ultrasonic sirens were focused on an airfield, which had the effect of making the tiny droplets of mist coagulate and fall like rain. Other ingenious methods have also been tried, but none is at all possible on a large scale. Nearly everyone is agreed that the remedy is to be found in prevention rather than in cure.

Our best hope seems to lie in electricity. Current is absolutely clean, and the power-stations have already gone a long way towards removing smoke, grit, and sulphur from their flue-gases. With dwindling supplies of better-class coal and with nuclear energy imminent, it looks as if industry, the railways, the collieries, and our homes will all have to be fully electrified. Only then will our skies become clean.

Table-Tennis

*To see the table-tennis ball
Aspinning on its lightsome way—
Its flight unbounded by a care,
It frolics gaily through the air.
To try and guide it to our will
Is our intent, our purpose grim,
But it remains the victor still,
The naughty little Her or Him!*

H. R. DAFFIN.



Trap-Door

HELEN GAJWTHROP

SIR THOMAS BROWNE once used a lovely phrase—"the ghost of a rose." I suppose one could talk about the ghost of a noise. At any rate, that's how I think of the sound that so disturbed us in that year of disturbances, 1940, when there were noises that were very much the opposite of supernatural ones. I remember, with some wonder, the power that still-unaccountable sound had to alarm us more than ever the natural enemy could.

We were children then, sent, after several unsuccessful attempts on the part of despairing elders to find us a safe home, to live for the duration with the Great-aunts Mill and Iza in their sequestered house, once the home of a now-scattered family. I suppose every Eden must have its serpent, and until the trap-door and the mysteries above it entered our consciousness this was an Eden, a Paradise of freedom—for us, who could romp all day and, despite our mother's farewell hints to the Aunts that we bathed every night, go unwashed to bed; for our dog, who, unreprimanded, slept on beds and nosed his bones behind sofa-cushions; for the mice and the spiders, provided they weren't over-intrusive; for the very dust, which was disturbed only just so often as was necessary—not so often,

many would judge; and for the weeds, that rioted everywhere in a wilderness of garden, so that roses bloomed among nettles, and the currant-bushes were wreathed with convolvulus, and ripe apples dropped into cushionings of wild elderberry. Whenever I read now, in Tennyson's 'Lotos-Eaters,' the line about the apples waxing over-mellow and dropping in the silence I see, not the dreamland of his poem, but that West Country wilderness and plump Aunt Mill, hands folded over her rotund frontage, murmuring as she regarded the profusion: 'We'd better have Miles's boy.'

We didn't, of course, and the weeds enjoyed an uninterrupted life-cycle. I doubt if the Aunts were capable of proceeding with any intention. If the enemy came, they used to say, they were each going to get into bed, chew a hundred aspirins, drink a bottle of whisky, and know no more about it. But they never got as far, even, as buying the aspirin: and if invaders had come, I used to think, they surely would not have harmed, but rather treated as prize captives, women whose fry-ups could be so glorious. Those tomatoes, fried with a thick, spicy sauce! That batter-pudding with its bottom crust of crisp, amber grease! Those bacon fritters, no larger than

peas, that we dipped in salt and ate with our fingers! And that concoction with the fascinating name, summer-di-fodder pudding; it could be made only when a cow had calved. Even the bread-and-butter was surprisingly and deliciously tasty, being spread, sometimes, by means of an unwashed knife that held a flavour of something that had preceded the butter. We startled our parents, later in time, by peevishly inquiring, one day, why they couldn't have the bread and butter cut with an oniony knife. Rationing did not seem, somehow, yet to have got its teeth into us, and we consumed slice after slice, peeled so beautifully off the loaf, before taking our candle and climbing into bed with very full turns.

Then our legs, briar-scratched, sunburnt, and nettle-stung, tingled against the cold linen sheets. We were often asleep before the candle had burned a quarter of its own length, but sometimes we would prattle of this and that until it performed a last brave salute to extinction: for the Aunts never bothered themselves by coming upstairs to put it out, and many a night we amused ourselves with its waxen tears, which we captured and modelled, and with a variety of minor excitements, like that of frizzling hairs from our heads in its flame.

A harvest-spider might appear, and we would watch its shadowy perambulation across the faded, tea-coloured wallpaper, until satisfied that it had turned in somewhere between the boards of the uneven floor. There might be the bombardment of a creature they called a 'midsummer-dore' batting the blind: or the blind itself would perform strange antics when breezes frisked.

GENERALLY, though, our nights were calm epilogues to happy days, and it was during one of these calms that, waking in darkness from deep sleep, I was immediately conscious, as if continuing a consciousness begun in sleep, of—of what? Of movement above the ceiling, making no more than the ghost of a noise, no more sound than insubstantial skirts, cleaving the air, or than the softest of brooms, hardly touching a floor. It must be the wind, I told myself, the wind stealing through a hole in the roof: it was creeping mice. But I knew it was not these things. Perhaps it was a sort of upflung echo of my little sister's breathing? Listening for

that, I found that she, too, lay wide awake, rigid and breathless. And there we both lay, stiff as Crusaders' effigies in some cold church, not daring even to whisper to one another, straining our eyes to penetrate the dark above us, mindful suddenly of the trap-door, to which we had hitherto paid little heed, set squarely over our heads.

The terrifying aspect of its being there was that whatever moved at the other side of the ceiling could open it and look through at us. We envisaged nothing worse than the looking, but that was frightening enough, and there was little consolation in the remembered comment of one of the Aunts to the effect that it was doubtful if the door did open, since nobody had tried to open it since the boys left home. It had not, they said, been opened for years and years, and, indeed, we couldn't imagine either Aunt Mill, or the scarcely less solid Aunt Iza, drawing herself up through its orifice.

I don't know, for the wheel of time moves slowly through the hour of apprehension, how long we remained like that before my sister screamed. The screams, alarming in themselves, continued, diminishing to whimpers only when the black bedroom ceiling was sliced, over by the half-open door, by a cheese-yellow triangle of light, which, panting with relief, we saw widen as Aunt Iza's slipped step could be heard, padding up the stairs. Dear, comfortable, dependable Aunt—

Only, the words that could have relieved us died unspoken on our lips. For Aunt Iza, holding her candle, was different. With queer, shadowed grooves about her mouth—for she had taken her teeth out—and her front hair rolled up in bits of crinkled metal, and sleepy, currant-black, expressionless eyes, she was a stranger from the woman we knew. Broodingly she seemed to look us over, and how scared she made us! She lisped mumbled commands to go to sleep and, bowed over her candle, shuffled off, leaving us, incapable of any communication with one so alien, to the dark.

THUS was Paradise lost. Our nights became dread interludes, never spoken of, so unaccountable are the silences of children, even to one another; forgotten when we were engrossed in daytime play, until suddenly memory, like an icy hand laid

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on the shoulder, reminded us that night must fall. All day we continued to romp in the wild garden or in the house's intriguing rooms: in the parlour, with its curiosities sent by the Uncles from abroad—dappled gazelle hides, bog-oak elephants, and, in the form of a double bronze fuchsia, on a handle of blue china beads, a camel-bell that jangled a minor, melancholy note. There were stacked-up postcard-albums with views of seaside piers and cathedrals, and here and there a coloured card that set us sniggering. One of the cards in particular we found excruciatingly funny. It showed a lady in a bath, holding a telegram which read: 'Come just as you are!' Laughing until we ached at that one, how could we then shudder at the actuality of a trap-door upstairs?

We played, too, in the big kitchen with its bread-bins, like Ali Baba's oil-jars, its smells of soap and pickles, and its cupboards full of preserves, looking, like all else in the house, undisturbed. We played, too, in the woodshed, where stars of light twinkled through tiny holes and the woodblock's surface was prickly as a million needles against our bare hunkers. And we played, too, I'm afraid, in the spacious outdoor water-closet, with its seat as wide as a shop-counter and pictures on the walls. Seated on that Throne of Contemplation, we gazed for long puzzled moments at one particular picture called 'The Snake in the Grass'. For where was the snake?

Then we were hailed from the house to fetch our jug of tea, mugs, and slices of bread and blackcurrant jam, partaken of each day in some delectable spot, usually the roof of the woodshed, sun-warmed and gritty, half-shadowed by the pear branches. And when a chill little breeze poked its fingers down the backs of our necks and the sky turned green above the fields of stubble beyond the garden we must go in with laggard steps to supper, to bed, to the trap-door and the horror it screened.

I DO not rightly recall for how long our nights were nightmares of listening for the Sound and, worse, wondering in the silence if it listened for us. I only know that it seemed a century before deliverance, of a sort, came unexpectedly, with a piece of government advice on the advisability of clearing lofts and attics and so discouraging incendiary

bombs. The Aunts, attentive for once to the voice of the B.B.C., exclaimed, as they had exclaimed on so many occasions: 'We'd better have Miles's boy,' Aunt Iza adding, as if repenting her rashness in suggesting action: 'Though there's nothing there. Don't you remember when our Charlie was at home—' 'Better have Miles's boy and make sure,' Aunt Mill said, determined for once. 'Better be safe than sorry!'

My heart was beating high. 'What did your Charlie do?' I asked.

'Do?' Aunt Iza was vague again. 'Oh, he went up there.'

I prayed desperately that their Charlie would come home and go up again, for I had no faith in any ultimate appearance of the boy, whom I had come to regard as mythical, like Dick of the Hatband and the man they saw about a dog. When he did appear, however, no myth after all, and no boy either, but a man of some forty years, his broad and bovine figure generated such confidence, for all that they said he had the mind of a nine-year-old, that I dared to follow him and his ladder into the bedroom.

'Dared' is perhaps inaccurate. I was *driven* to follow would be nearer the truth, driven by the desperation of a wish to learn the worst. So I stood below while Miles's boy pushed, first with his hand and then, the door unyielding, with his head, ramming the lid just as Chaucer's miller must have done, only, luckily, Miles's boy's head was padded with a cloth cap, and I suppose the village would have said that in any case there was nothing in it to come to any harm. In the end, after an amount of grunting on Miles's boy's part and groaning on the door's, the door succumbed and with a protesting crack allowed itself to be pushed up. 'Sempty, missis!' called Miles's boy in some disappointment, flashing his torch about within the loft. 'Oi can't find nuthin'. Oi'm acomin' down.'

In a frenzy of desperation I shouted 'No!' and scrambled up the ladder, while his moon-face loomed in the opening above, heaved myself frantically through, and stood upright beside him. His torchlight shone on rafter and floorboard and on the roof-tiling, through which daylight glinted. He obligingly covered every inch with the light. 'Sempty, in'it?' he said.

I nodded, looking in panic for what I wanted so much to see.

Then, 'Oi'm acomin' down,' repeated Miles's boy, and because he had the torch, and because, after what I had not found, I dared not to stay, I could do no more than follow.

I SHALL always wonder at the force of some inborn knowledge that can, on occasion, keep a child's mouth shut as tightly as a trap-door. How many times might the words of a child have destroyed the peace of those past childhood? If I had spoken, I might have troubled the placid lives of my two lotos-eating aunts, who had, bless them, to pass the rest of their days—and nights—under that roof.

'No,' I told them, 'there's nothing there.' I didn't tell of the oddness of that very fact—that up in the loft emptiness was complete,

that, in a house where mouse and spider suffered little molestation, there was, above the trap-door, no cobweb, no film of dust or soot, nothing, not even a smell of disuse, nothing save a strict and spotless and horrifying cleanliness.

To my credit be it recorded that I did not confide in my sister and that for the remainder of the time that we must sleep there, before the growing fierceness of enemy attack on other parts of the country stirred the Aunts to move us to a lower floor, I faced the night fear alone.

'There's nothing up there, is there?' my sister would say sleepily, as she snuggled down to happy slumber.

'No,' I would say. 'Nothing at all.' And, while the candle flickered itself out, I watched the trap-door and listened for the sound of a ghostly sweeping.

Contact-Lenses

VERONICA HEATH

FIFTEEN years ago contact-lenses were almost unknown to the general public. To-day they are accepted as the answer to the spectacle-wearer's prayer. They are widely used by people in every walk of life and have assuredly a great future.

Contact-lenses were first suggested in 1847 by an Englishman, Sir John Herschel, physicist and Astronomer Royal. Forty years later the first one was actually made by F. E. Müller, an artificial-eye maker of Wiesbaden, but it was used as a protective glass. Finally, in the following year, in 1888, Dr Eugen Flick, of Zurich, made an attempt to improve vision by the use of contact-lenses.

The progressive souls who submitted themselves for the fitting of these lenses in the early days of their development were indeed fortunate if they could wear them in comfort,

for the failures greatly outnumbered the successes. Baffled by these unsuccessful cases, those who believed that the principle behind the idea was sound made ceaseless experiments, carrying out painstaking research into the factors governing comfort in wear. One by one these factors were discovered and a measure of control achieved, and the percentage of patients able to wear their lenses in comfort for reasonably long periods steadily increased.

NOWADAYS, practically all contact-lenses are made in transparent plastic material. Risk of breakage in handling them is thus eliminated. They are moulded to fit the eyeball so perfectly as to cause no friction to the eye at all. It is possible to wear modern lenses

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in complete unawareness of their presence, so lightly do they cling to the eyeball, following its every movement. There is, however, still a time limit to the period of wear. Indeed, it is better that this should be so, for the cornea must exhale carbon dioxide and absorb oxygen. Many present-day lenses permit this necessary respiration through tiny holes which prevent complete enclosure of the cornea. Most people can only wear their lenses for a few hours at a stretch, but the story is told of a soldier taking part in the Sicily campaign who kept his in for twenty-six days continually.

The fitting technique is no longer an ordeal. When the eyeball is regular in shape a pre-fabricated type of lens is often fitted, the correct shape being selected from an extensive fitting set. It is, however, sometimes necessary to take an impression of the eye—a simple and painless procedure to-day. From this impression is prepared a plaster-model reproducing exactly the contour of the eyeball. A plastic sheet is then pressed to conform to the model and the so-called semi-finished shell is tried on the eye and inspected for accuracy of fit. Should adjustments be found to be necessary, they are carried out at this stage and the finishing of the optic or sight-portion of the lens constitutes the final stage in its manufacture.

STRANGELY enough, the contact-lens is not always employed to improve vision. Occasionally a lens is fitted to suppress vision, eliminating a badly-blurred picture resulting from severe injury to an eye, and for which no remedy can be devised. A distorted image of this kind may handicap the fellow-eye, and the special contact-lens takes the place of an unsightly eye-shade which would otherwise be necessary.

There are a few ocular defects which are incapable of improvement except with contact-lenses. It was for such conditions that they were originally devised. But 90 per cent of the contact-lens users to-day wear these visual aids because of their invisibility. With eyes of normal appearance perfect vision is enjoyed

with no indication of ocular defect. Although you did not realise it, you have probably met and spoken to an acquaintance who was wearing contact-lenses.

Sportsmen find these lenses of priceless value. Footballers, swimmers, tennis and hockey players, and speedway riders wear them. A well-known jockey, the rider of a Derby winner, races regularly in them. The wearer does not suffer the inconvenience caused by rain and mist, which blur ordinary spectacles, and he has the added confidence of knowing that his glasses cannot fall off. The contact-lenses, occupying a position protected by the orbital bones and the eyelids, are less liable to breakage than spectacles. A number of well-known actors and actresses with poor sight have found added confidence on the stage and screen-set by being able to see well with these invisible aids. During the late war men for the Navy and the Air Force who wore contact-lenses were examined by experts for their eyesight. These men passed the tests without difficulty, because, unless the eyeball was actually tapped by the examiners, the lenses were never discovered.

IT must be admitted that contact-lenses have certain disadvantages. Considerable perseverance is sometimes required to become thoroughly proficient at wearing them. Allergy appears to play some part in the question of tolerance, and sufferers from hay-fever, asthma, and other allergic complaints seldom take kindly to contact-lenses.

Although they are expensive, contact-lenses need not be remade for at least three years, and there is no need for further fittings as the shape of the eye never alters. Each lens is a combination of intricate sculpture and precise optical accuracy, and is made individually for each and every eye.

Contact-lenses are used only by those people who have a very real desire to dispense with spectacles. Their motive may be a vocational or occupational one, or merely a strong psychological urge to be rid of their glasses, because of a strong feeling of inferiority created by the need to wear them.



The Investment

DAL STIVENS

THEY used to say that tramps and swaggies had secret signs which they wrote on gates and trees so that their fellows who came afterwards would know what to expect at farm-houses—such as 'This is a good bloke,' or 'A sure touch,' and 'This cove is mean,' or 'The dog bites.' There must have been something in it, because my Uncle Septimus was rarely troubled by tramps and swaggies and my Uncle Henry was continually. Indeed, my brother Bill and I saw a tramp saunter up to Uncle Septimus's neat front-gate, take one look, and then hurry away smartly. He went on a couple of hundred yards to Uncle Henry's tumbledown gate, paused, threw up his head, and marched confidently up the track to Uncle Henry's house.

Tramps and swaggies were always sure of a feed at my Uncle Henry's, something to smoke, an odd job or two if they wanted it (Uncle never pressed them), and, more often than not, a few bob. It was lending a swagman a couple of pounds once that touched off an argument between Uncle Henry and Uncle Septimus and brought with it most curious consequences.

'Throwing money away giving it to a tramp,' said my Uncle Septimus, screwing up his lips and jiggling round on short bowed legs.

He was a restless little man, perky, and sometimes tart in manner.

'He wasn't a tramp, Septimus,' said my Uncle Henry, reprovingly.

It was an important distinction. The swagman was a professional, a man who followed the track and knew how to roll a swag correctly, using a tent fly and a couple of blue blankets. He was often a shearer or other seasonal worker. A tramp was a dead-beat and often a townie.

'Not that a tramp shouldn't be helped,' added my Uncle Henry. 'But this bloke was a swaggie. He wanted to send a couple of quid to his sick mother. He promised me he'd pay it back.'

'Promised!' said Uncle Septimus, out of the corners of his mouth and sniffing through his beaky nose. 'Swaggies or tramps, they're all dang thieves—and loafers. You can kiss that two quid good-bye—on both cheeks.'

'He looked honest,' said Uncle Henry, his soft brown eyes sparking a little under Septimus's attack. 'I know he was honest.'

'They've all got tongues smooth enough to talk a parrot out of his seed,' declared Septimus, tartly.

Uncle Henry could have turned it back on Septimus by saying no tramp or swaggie had ever managed to talk Septimus out of a crust

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of stale bread, let alone birdseed. But he was too generous. Instead, he said coaxingly: 'Aw, come on, Septimus. How would you like it if it was your son begging for a couple of quid to send to his sick mother?'

'I haven't got a son,' said Septimus. 'I'm a confirmed bachelor.'

'Well, if you had a son?' said my Uncle Henry, stooping his lean body earnestly. 'Or, supposing you wanted to send a couple of notes to your sick mother?'

'I'd never get I'd have to beg,' said Septimus.

Uncle Henry tipped his hat back and tried again. 'Suppose your stud-bull was sick and you needed two quid badly—you'd think it was a bit tough if someone couldn't lend a helping hand.'

Uncle Septimus raised a hillock in the dust with the toe of his boot and demolished it before answering: 'It might be different then, but I'd never get that way.' He plucked at his bottom lip. 'Tell you what, I'll bet you a couple of notes you never see your dough again. You should have taken his watch when he offered it to you as security.'

'Done!' said Uncle Henry. 'And when I win my bet, I'll give it to that poor fellow.' Uncle Henry now took in the enormity of Septimus's suggestion about the watch. 'What, rob a man of the watch his father gave him! I'd sooner lose my money than do such a thing!'

'The money to be paid back within a month or you lose your bet,' said Uncle Septimus. 'You can pay up now and get it over.'

'How's a poor fellow to save two quid in a month?' asked Uncle Henry. 'Make it three months.'

After some persuasion Septimus agreed to wait three months.

Uncle Henry went and sat on the veranda. I could see he was hurt by what he felt was Septimus's hard-heartedness, though he was too charitable, I think, to admit such a description of his brother into his thoughts. The warmest and gentlest of men, my Uncle Henry thought all his fellows were made in his mould, and when he found one of them wasn't, he was wounded. Septimus, on the other hand, had, or professed, a somewhat gloomy opinion of mankind.

afternoon, knocked softly on the back-door, and had asked for the boss. Aunt Lil was rather impressed, the more so because the last visitor had thumped loudly and demanded: 'Some meat and tea, missus, and chuck in a plug of tobacco while you're on the job!' 'Some cheek!' Aunt Lil had said, throwing up her head, and sent the man about his business, and then, relenting, had called him back, saying in her crisp manner: 'This time, but watch your manners!'

This new visitor, however, took his hat off, and said: 'I'm not asking for food, but I wonder if the boss will lend me two pounds on this watch.' He pulled out a silver watch.

The swagman was about thirty, big and heavy in build. He had dark hair. He carried a drum swag on his back and a billy in one hand. His face and arms were darkly sun-tanned. 'I'll leave the watch with the boss, if he likes,' said the swagman. 'I don't want to sell it—it was my father's—but I must raise a few quid to send to my mother. She's sick.'

'The boss is away at a sale, but he'll be back soon,' said Aunt Lil. 'Sit on the steps and wait. I'll make you a cup of tea and give you a bite to eat.'

'It's kind of you, mum,' said the man. 'But I won't trouble you. I didn't come here to ask for food. All I want is—'

It sounded sincere enough. However, he had no chance to make his point with Aunt Lil. She said the kettle was on the boil and that there was some cold beef in the safe. Aunt Lil had her masterful moments in living up to the bush creed of hospitality. Within a few minutes a plate of beef and tomatoes and a cup of tea were set in front of the swagman. 'Eat that while you wait,' said Aunt Lil. One of Aunt Lil's beliefs was that a man with a half-empty stomach was no good to man or God. The swagman, notwithstanding his earlier protests, was well on the way to redemption with the help of two plates of beef and four cups of tea when Uncle Henry came home.

My Uncle Henry always wore his best suit to auction sales—they had for him some of the sanctity and festival air of Sundays and agricultural show days. But blue serge was not a comfortable choice for a hot day and soon after climbing down the sulky steps and stamping on the veranda to shake the powdery dust off his best brown boots Uncle Henry was tugging off his coat. That done, he

THE swagman who started the difference of opinion had come up the track in the late

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hung it on a nail, fanned some air with both hands towards his hot face, blew loudly, and exclaimed: 'Ah, that's better!'

He saw the swagman and nodded good-day to him. 'A cow of a day!' said my Uncle Henry. 'The wethers were too dear, Lil. They'd need to grow gold thread at the prices they were asking. I let them go.'

It must not be thought that Uncle Henry was losing his punch so far as auction sales were concerned. His romantic nature was rarely stirred by sheep. It is difficult for anyone to be poetical about sheep.

'You'd better bank that money, to-morrow, then,' said Aunt Lil.

After a few more words and the handing of a bag of lollies to Bill and myself—Uncle invariably brought us bull's-eyes—Uncle Henry heard the swagman out, refused to take the watch as security, and lent him the two pounds, tugging the notes out of his hip-pocket. He went further. 'You don't have to feel obliged to accept, but I can find you a job,' said Uncle Henry. 'Forget about the money—that's a business transaction.'

I am sorry to say that Uncle Septimus, who was standing near by and who had been grimacing throughout Henry's chat with the swaggie, now snorted quite loudly over these words. The swaggie probably heard, because he answered: 'No, I don't want a job!'

'Okay,' said Uncle Henry. 'I just wondered.'

He went over to the sulky and began bringing the groceries into the kitchen. Uncle had called at the store on the way home from the auction. We kids lent a hand and some time during this job the swagman left. It was then that Septimus put his oar in and began criticising Uncle Henry. A less kind man than my Uncle Henry would have cut Septimus short instead of hearing him out.

ABOUT a quarter of an hour after the sealing of the bet, Uncle missed his money. He went to get his wallet out of his inside coat-pocket, and it wasn't there. Uncle Henry, in increasing distress, searched all his pockets, once and then twice, then the floor of the sulky and the ground about. 'Fifty quid gone!' he muttered, 'I must have dropped it somewhere.'

Uncle Septimus knew what had happened. 'That dang tramp took it!' he cried. 'I'd spit my death on it!'

'Oh, no!' said Uncle Henry. 'He was a nice fellow.'

'Dang thief!' Septimus started yelling to Uncle Henry's hired man. 'Jake! Jake!'

'What are you about?'

'I'm going after your money,' said Septimus. 'Jake! Jake! Saddle Flossie!'

'I'm sure he didn't take it,' said Uncle Henry. 'Why, he offered to let me have his watch—it was worth a good tenner!'

'All eyewash to get you in and make you trust him,' said Septimus in a voice that was both triumphant and despondent, expressing his discovery that the world was a regrettably wicked place. 'The watch trick is as old—as old as the Bible. Jake! Jake!' Jake came hurrying up. 'Don't stand there gawking, man! Saddle Flossie!'

'You're not going, Septimus,' said Uncle Henry firmly. 'I could have lost the dough at the store or on the way home. I know I had it at the store. I'll advertise for it in the *Advocate* and offer a fiver—no, a tenner!'

'Cheaper and surer to chase after that thief!' said Septimus. 'Jake, saddle Flossie!'

Although Septimus's tone sounded resolute enough, Jake didn't move. He knew Septimus wouldn't be going after the swagman—not if Uncle Henry said no.

Uncle Henry was as good as his word. He got on the telephone and after waiting half-an-hour—it was a party-line—spoke to the editor of the *Advocate*, who said he would run a piece in the issue about to go to press.

While this was going on, Septimus pursed his lips but said little. 'It's your money,' he said after Henry hung up.

However, Septimus must have said a lot the next day when he went to town, because about sundown Sergeant Donnegan bicycled out to see Uncle Henry. 'I hear you want to lay a charge,' he said, slipping his feet off the pedals and planting his fat legs on the ground. His face was wet with sweat from the ride and he undid four silver buttons on his tunic. 'We keep an eye on these boys and we'll soon pick him up.' The sergeant had a brown moustache and though it was wet, too, he tried to coax it with his fingers into some aggressiveness.

'No, I'm not laying any charge,' said Uncle Henry. He had been crawling under a header with a spanner and had wormed his way out. He flourished the spanner. 'There's no one to lay it against.'

'I've heard different,' said the sergeant, 'and if a theft's been committed...'

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'No theft has been committed,' said Uncle Henry. 'I know Septimus blames the poor fellow.'

'We'll poor fellow him when we pick him up,' said the policeman.

After some pleading by Uncle, Sergeant Donnegan agreed to take no action for a day. 'But no longer,' he warned, lowering his well-filled trousers on to the bike seat and making the rear tyre broaden. 'I shouldn't be doing what I am doing but since you're so sure you lost it and that that cove didn't pinch it. Endangering my job, that's what I'm at.'

SERGEANT DONNEGAN'S dilemma was solved early next morning. About nine o'clock the swagman came up the track and handed Uncle Henry the wallet, saying: 'I was about to hand this in to the police when I saw in the paper that you had lost it. On the side of the road, back there it was.' He pointed. 'Lucky for you I saw the paper—' He broke off.

Uncle Henry didn't seem to notice. He was beside himself. 'That's great! That's wonderful!' he kept saying.

'By the side of the road it was,' said the swagman.

'I knew someone would find it,' said Uncle Henry. 'Least, I hoped they would.'

He opened the wallet, counted out ten pounds and then added another five pounds, and pushed the lot into the swaggie's hands. The man tried to push it away. He started going red in the face. 'Oh, no, boss!' he said. 'I can't take it. I can't!'

'By hang, you have to!' said Uncle Henry. 'It's the reward. And take the two quid I gave you on the watch as well.'

The swagman was upset and kept protesting, but Uncle was not to be withstood. The man took the money, stood for a full minute, staring at the ground. 'You offered me a job, yesterday, boss. All right, I'll take it!'

My Uncle Septimus had a lot to say next day when he learned what Henry had done. 'I'll take my oath he's a dang loafer as well,' was his opening shot.

'What do you mean—loafer as well?' asked my Uncle Henry. 'We know nothing of the sort! He found the money and brought it back.'

'And took his time about it!' said my Uncle Septimus. 'He pinched the dough and then got the wind up.'

'He found it and brought it back,' said my Uncle Henry. 'That's all I know, and it's all I want to know. It's good enough for me, Septimus.'

Septimus sucked his teeth and didn't reply immediately. 'It's your pigeon,' he said. 'But I'd watch him closely, and I'll bet he loafes on the job.'

'He doesn't seem to be going too badly,' said my Uncle Henry, pointing to the wood-heap, where the new man, whose name was Tom, was at work. 'I've seen a lot worse with an axe.' Tom's thick brown arms were swinging powerfully. The chips were flying and the heap of chopped wood was very respectable.

'New brooms sweep clean,' said my Uncle Septimus. 'See what he's doing in a week. By the way, has he said anything about paying you back the two quid he borrowed? I bet he hasn't!'

'I added it to the reward,' said my Uncle Henry. 'But this morning Tom came to me and said he would work for a month for nothing. I wouldn't hear of it, of course.'

'You're a big soft mug,' said my Uncle Septimus, but not unkindly. There was even, I thought, a hint of admiration in it. But instantly, as though he was wanting to make his position clear, my Uncle Septimus added: 'You'd better hide your money and tell Lil to count the silver.'

Uncle Septimus did not drop a subject easily, and daily for nearly a month he had his little dig at my Uncle Henry or Aunt Lil. 'Have you counted the silver lately?' he asked Aunt Lil once. 'Dang thief and loafer, I bet!'

'No,' said my Aunt Lil, 'I haven't. If I had a nice sideboard, I could count it.'

Uncle Septimus had touched on a raw spot. This was shortly after Uncle Henry and Aunt Lil had married. Aunt Lil had wanted a sideboard and though Uncle Henry was always promising to pick one up at the next auction sale, somehow he never got round to it.

'I'd count all the spoons, then,' said my Uncle Septimus.

'Off with you!' said my Aunt Lil, a little irritably. She thought this was hitting a bit below the belt. As she sometimes complained in moments of exasperation: 'I've got some of our wedding presents stacked away in a cupboard as though I was ashamed of them.'

At the end of the month, however, Uncle Septimus admitted: 'Not a bad worker, but still a dang thief, Henry!'

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TOM, meanwhile, had settled in well. At first, he had been silent, even a little unfriendly, but now he had begun to thaw. He turned out to be a good farm-hand; he knew and liked the work. 'I was born on a farm,' he told us kids one day, when we had got to know him. 'I don't know why I ever left it. It seemed dull, I suppose. So I learnt a trade.'

At first Uncle Septimus would never speak to Tom, but merely throw him a more or less civil nod. After a couple of months, however, Septimus took to saying 'Good-morning,' and even to having brief yarns. 'He's not a bad worker and maybe I was wrong about that!' was how he excused himself when he thought he saw a half-smile on Aunt Lil's face.

Aunt Lil could stand up to Septimus as well as anyone, and she said now: 'Tom's a very good worker, and you know it!'

'Not bad,' my Uncle Septimus conceded. 'But it's probably a plot to get you to trust him.'

'You're getting as sour as an old lemon, Septimus,' said my Aunt Lil. 'You ought to get married.'

'Not on your life!' said my Uncle Septimus, giving a little skip to emphasise his abhorrence at her suggestion. 'I'm not soft enough in the head for that. I'm my own boss, and I want to stay that way.'

'Yes, you are,' said my Aunt Lil, slowly, and smiling in the way she had when she was ready with something. 'Yes, you are your own boss, Septimus, and a very hard time you give yourself, too.' And, having said this, she turned back to her washing.

Septimus looked blankly at her, scowled a little in defeat, and went back to his farm.

In the next few months Septimus grew to having quite long yarns with Tom. I saw them one morning talking for about half-an-hour. Tom was mending a fence and Septimus stayed with him and even lent a hand towards the end of the talk. He didn't as much as notice for several minutes that Uncle Henry had come along. When he did, he looked sheepish, left Tom rather abruptly and joined Henry.

Septimus waited for ten minutes before bringing Tom into the conversation with Uncle Henry. Then he said: 'Pity about that bloke.'

'What's a pity?'

'The way he's turned out to be,' said Septimus. 'He knows a hell of a lot about stud-bulls—brought up amongst them, in fact. It's a pity he's taken the wrong path.'

'Seems to me he's on the right path,' said my Uncle Henry and then looked a bit embarrassed and changed the subject.

Yet Septimus slowly weakened in his attitude to the new hand in the ensuing month; his gibes grew infrequent and were only stirred into life when he found himself inadvertently praising Tom. His antagonism might even have died away completely if my Uncle Henry had not decided to take a holiday in Sydney and leave Tom in charge of the farm.

Uncle Septimus grew hot when he heard. 'You're plain crazy!' he told Henry. 'You ought to be locked up. Maybe I was wrong about him being a loafer, but once a thief always a thief. You want your bumps read.'

There was a lot more of it, but I suspect that by this time my Uncle Henry had acquired the habit of not really listening to Septimus, because he did not say very much and quietly persisted in his plans.

'Well, he won't get away with much with me about,' said Septimus to my Uncle Henry on the day he and Aunt Lil left for Sydney. 'I'll be over bright and early each morning and I'll even keep a sharp eye on the place at night.'

WHEN Uncle Henry had been gone only a week, I noticed that Uncle Septimus was beginning to show signs of wear from his self-imposed night-watchman's task. There were rings under his eyes and his step and manner were no longer as perky as they had been. Once I even saw him yawn. But his resolution was undaunted. 'I'll stick it out for the remaining two weeks if it kills me!' I heard him tell my father.

'You'd be wiser to get your sleep at your age,' said my father.

'What do you mean by my age?' said Septimus. Septimus was fifty. His eyes flashed. 'Would you like to put them up?' And he cocked his fists. Septimus had been a great fighter in his youth, and was still good—but the challenge was, I think, mainly a gesture.

'The place is all right, and Tom's all right,' said my father.

Uncle Septimus now cocked a slightly bloodshot and sleepless eye. 'Another soft fool!' it seemed to say. The fists came down.

Tom carried on as though he were quite unaware of Uncle Septimus's surveillance, going about his work expertly. He was up

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before dawn and still busy well after sunset. Indeed, my brother Bill and I saw the light in Tom's hut at midnight. We'd been asleep and woke up. Bill went to the window and saw the light first. 'What's he up at this hour for?' he asked.

'Lord knows,' I said. 'Perhaps he's just knocked off.'

'Or about to go possum hunting,' Bill suggested, without conviction.

He asked Tom about what he was doing next day.

Tom looked intently at us, smiling. 'Ask no questions—' he began. 'I'll tell you, I'm taking up my trade again.'

'Show us what you're doing,' said Bill, excited.

'Later,' Tom was firm. 'You'll see in good time.'

'Spit our death,' we promised.

'Better not tell you,' said Tom. He burst out laughing. 'Surprise for your Uncle Septimus, too!' He paused before going on: 'But not a word'—Tom put a finger on his lips—'to anyone.'

We spat to show we realised the sobriety of the occasion.

We couldn't get any more from him, though we were curious, we would not go near his hut. That would not have been playing fair. But there was nothing to stop us watching his hut at night, and often we saw his light was on at a late hour, and once we distinctly heard the sound of hammering, carried nearly a mile on the strong wind.

UNCLE HENRY and Aunt Lil had been gone just over two weeks when at three o'clock one morning there was a loud thumping and knocking on the back door and yells from Uncle Septimus that woke us all into heart-thumping wakefulness. We got up and found Septimus jumping up and down on the steps and flashing a lantern about in his excitement. 'What did I tell you?' cried Septimus. 'There's a light in the cottage. He's obviously making his haul now.'

'Rubbish!' said my father. He had less patience with Septimus than my Uncle Henry. 'Go back to bed.'

'I tell you he's up to no good,' cried Septimus. 'Why should he be in Henry's house?'

It was a bit hard to answer, and my father gave in to Septimus and agreed to accompany

him to the house. My brother Bill and I went, too. We were not going to miss it—whatever it was—so we gave our mother the slip and discreetly joined my father and Uncle Septimus. We were, by the way, solidly in the anti-Septimus camp.

'Perhaps it's a surprise for Uncle Henry,' said Bill.

Septimus heard this. He snorted. 'Surprise is right!'

'You never know,' said Bill, holding his ground. 'Tom said something to me about a surprise—for you, too.'

'You promised not to tell,' I said quickly.

'No cheek from you, young shaver,' said Uncle Septimus to Bill, taking what we felt was one of the mean advantages adults were able to take in these matters.

We drew near the house, with Uncle Septimus leading, and approached the best-room window, where the light was showing. The blind was up and the curtains were aside, so we were able to look right in. Under the overhanging air-gas lamp Tom was taking Aunt Lil's silver wedding presents out of the cupboard and stacking them on the floor.

'What did I say!' cried my Uncle Septimus, and he rushed round to the back-door and into the house. He led the way into the best-room and Tom sprang up, startled.

'Caught in the act, by hang!' shouted Uncle Septimus.

'Yes,' said Tom, with great calm. 'It was to have been a surprise for everyone. Cabinet-making used to be my trade.'

'Surprise!' snorted Uncle Septimus and started to say more. He broke off because he saw, as we did, that Tom was pointing to the magnificent sideboard he had made in his hut and moved in that night. It was fully eight feet long with carved doors and legs; its mahogany surface was so highly polished it glistened under the light like water; and it was altogether a noble piece of furniture, fit for a mansion.

'Well, I'll be jiggered!' said my Uncle Septimus and stumped out of the room. But within a minute he was back to apologise handsomely in a speech that lasted some minutes and which concluded with: 'Now that's off my chest, I'll get some sleep.'

My Uncle Septimus was nothing if not wholehearted, and next morning he donned more sackcloth and apologised again so fervently that Tom was embarrassed. 'If you ever want another job, you can come and look

THE INVESTMENT

after my stud Hereford bull,' he ended. My Uncle Septimus could have made no greater expression of confidence than this.

In later years it occurred to us to wonder if Tom realised how complete his discomfiting of Uncle Septimus had been in making a side-board for the silver he was expected to steal.

TOM worked for my Uncle Henry for seven years. I remember, and then fell in love with a girl in Mundabilla. He married her, began share-farming, and in time bought his own farm.

That wasn't all of Tom's story, though it was not until many years afterwards that I learnt it, and then not from Uncle Henry but from Aunt Lil.

On the last night before Tom left to marry he said suddenly to Uncle Henry at tea:

'You know, Henry, I did pinch your money. I brought it back because you were the first man who ever trusted me. I reckoned you'd send the police after me, but I had it well hidden. Still, you didn't. Shocks you, doesn't it?'

'No,' said Uncle Henry. 'I knew. Not at first, but when you brought it back. That was why I gave you fifteen quid—I was so pleased you'd thought better of it.'

'Well, I'm damned!' said Tom. 'It was seventeen quid though—not fifteen. And you, missus?'

'I had my ideas,' said Aunt Lil.

When my Uncle Septimus heard of this, I'm told he pretended to be very annoyed, and then exclaimed rather strangely: 'It took seventeen quid to make an honest man!'

He was setting it too cheaply. It cost a lot of faith, too.

'Margaret, Will You Feed the Hens?'

*'Margaret, will you feed the hens
And stop your idling at the gate?'
'Surely the post will come to-day.
I wonder why the postman's late.'*

*'It makes a draught within the house.
Now do make haste and close that door.'
'I see a flashing on the hill.
His bike is coming down the moor.'*

*'I might as well talk to the walls.
It's only bills that come this way.'
'He's turning into Lady Royd.
They'll give him tea and he'll delay.'*

*'Margaret, will you feed the hens?
It's nearly noon. God keep me calm.'
'They must be out. Thank heavens for that.
Ah no, he's stopped at Baggitt Farm.'*

*'Out of sight is out of mind.
If it's that Dan, it's just as well.'
'He's nearing to the stepping-stones.
'There is a letter. I can tell.'*

*'Margaret, will you feed the hens?
No wonder they go off the lay.'
'A fine life this. Just hens, hens, hens.
There is no post again to-day.'*

GEORGE MOOR.

Twice-Told Tales

XXXVIII.—From Road to Railroad

[From *Chambers's Journal* of February 1854]

THE great road from London to Bristol ran through the town, and as some twenty or thirty coaches then travelled every day from one of those cities to the other, we were indebted to them for no small amount of bustle and business. It was a cheery sight to see the compact, well-appointed vehicles come dashing along the road, and pull up at the stopping-place, where four vigorous horses were waiting to relieve the panting team that had just arrived. How well the hostlers understood their work, and with what celerity they got through it! Nothing but sleight of hand, acquired by long practice, could have sent the coach speeding on again in less than two minutes. The mails, up and down, always went through about midnight; and I heard so many stories about their swiftness, the red-coated drivers and guards, that I had a painful longing to see one of those, to me, mysterious vehicles, which, however, was never gratified in my boyhood. Besides these, we had four or five coaches of our own, distinguished one from the other as the 'nine o'clock,' the 'ten o'clock,' etc., according to the hour at which they set off. Some of these were mainly supported by farmers, millers, and others of the genus, who 'went up' regularly to Mark-lane market. I remember when they used to be six or seven hours on the road, and how everybody was surprised when a spirited 'properietor,' as the hostlers used to have it, started the *Telegraph*, to do the journey in from four and half to five hours. What was the world coming to! At all events, the slow coaches had to transform themselves into fast ones, and another proprietor 'put up' a coach to run to London and back in the day. You started at five in the morning, winter or summer, and were put down at the White-horse Cellar, Piccadilly, at ten, or at

the Bolt-in-Tun, Fleet Street, half an hour later, with about five hours wherein to transact your business. At four in the afternoon, you started for the return-journey, and got home to supper. How we youngsters once stared at our father after his first day-trip; it seemed impossible that he could have gone to London and back since five in the morning!

Then, one afternoon, Mr Gurney rattled into town with his steam-carriage, on his experimental trip from Bristol to London; and solemn folks shook their heads, and said it was 'a tempting of Providence'; and some of the knowing sort sneeringly remarked, 'that's a cock that won't fight.' But ere long came tidings of wonderful doings in the north, followed soon after by the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, which was a fact that neither the solemn ones nor the knowing ones could in anywise explain away.

By and by, a railway from London to our town and many miles further was talked about. My stars! an earthquake could not have caused greater alarm. Hundreds who foresaw damage to the coaching-trade became virtuously indignant; hundreds more predicted the utter ruin of the town; and hundreds more vowed that if a railway should be made, they, for their part, would still travel by stage-coach. Many were the clever circumventions used, and public meetings held, and bribes of shares judiciously administered, before the idea could be made palatable. Even in the end, it found but small favour; but the beginning had been made, and every day the rails came nearer and nearer, till at last we had a station of our own, and those who had mocked at steam found out their mistake, and chewed the cud of bitter fancy with such philosophy as they were capable of.

Science at Your Service

AN ELECTRIC OVENETTE

A SELF-CONTAINED cooker that can be run off an electric lighting-point, can roast, bake, and grill, heats up in approximately five minutes, and is claimed to save half the normal cost of fuel for its cooking operations seems revolutionary enough. This appliance is made of polished aluminium. It is circular in shape, the basting-pan and fitting lid being approximately 14 inches in diameter. The lid has a glass panel in the centre through which the cooking operation can be watched. The heating is based upon annular channel heating, claimed to produce a ring of heat round the food. The cooker, though as portable and compact as a large saucepan, can roast two 4-lb. chickens at the same time. After food has been cooked, the appliance is easily cleaned as all edges are rounded. Both the lid and the pan have a pair of heat insulated handles for lifting. The cooker can also be used for fruit-bottling. A collar to provide extra height may be purchased as an accessory; with this fitted between pan and lid, enough height is obtained for seven 2-lb. preserving-jars to be sterilised at once. The loading is 700 watts, enabling the cooker to be run off either lighting or power circuits.

SAVING THE MOTORIST'S OIL?

A recent research development from Canada may ultimately save motorists as much as three-quarters of their expenditure upon oil. The oxidation processes that gradually bring about deterioration in hydrocarbon oils can be retarded if small amounts of lithium, sodium, potassium, or magnesium salts are present. The Canadian idea is to build a source of one of these anti-oxidation agents into the oil-plug or the oil-filter, and preliminary tests have given highly promising results. It is possible that oil need not be changed for 6000 or more miles of running instead of after the usual 1000 or so miles. There is no commercial development as yet and considerably more testing will be required first; however, the device has already been patented by the National Research Council of Canada.

PICTURE CLOCKS

Clocks that are also pictures is a relatively novel development in design, at any rate in the field of moderately priced household clocks. A wide variety of such clocks has lately been introduced by a British company. In some designs the conventional shape of a round-faced clock is retained, in others the rectangular picture-frame shape is used. Perhaps the most attractive are those in which the clock hands and dial appear almost shyly in the corner of the picture. Several designs can be obtained either as electric or hand-wound clocks. One picture or background that seems ideally associated with time-keeping is a reproduction of an old map of the world.

SILICONES FOR FURNITURE

The group of synthetic chemicals now known as silicones were for many years little more than curiosities of scientific research. As is well known, carbon is able to form a limitless number of compounds, and organic chemistry is devoted to the study of this diversity of substances. Silicon, however, is an element closely related to carbon and it possesses a similar capacity to form many compounds; like carbon atoms, so silicon atoms can link themselves in a long chain as the backbone of a molecule and other elements attach themselves to the chain-linked silicon atoms. In the last ten years the practical possibilities of these silicon compounds have been intensively investigated. They possess unusual properties as water-repelling substances and lubricants for high-temperature duty. New car-polishes based upon silicones have attracted considerable interest. A silicone-based furniture-cream is now available in Britain. Owing to the water-repellent property, it is claimed by the manufacturers that, after polishing, surfaces will keep much freer from dust, grease, and dirt. It is suitable for use on glass, enamel, leather, plastic, and paint surfaces as well as on wood. It is packed in bottles shaped for easy handling.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

WOOD MANTEL REVIVAL?

The wooden mantel or surround for tiled fireplaces is returning to favour and is now being built by a famous piano-manufacturing firm. The piano industry has long been renowned for its standard of workmanship, especially finish, which is exemplified in this new range. In the manufacture of these mantels particular regard has been given to stability. This has been achieved by the incorporation of lamination—where practicable and desirable—and resin-bonding throughout. The timber used in the construction of these mantels is of prime African mahogany and the lacquer polished finish is heat-resisting to a degree which should withstand radiated heat from the fire. The polish finish is cellulose and, should the surface become dirty and dull in service, any of the usual car polishes applied will bring back the lustre.

An interesting technical feature is the use of a special process to protect the mantel surface during fitting and until room decoration has been completed. In this process a flexible film is applied to cover the entire wooden surface; it can be readily stripped off when the workmen leave the premises. The mantels are finished in oak, walnut, or mahogany, and in one design a chinese lacquer finish is available with original hand-decorated designs, each of which is given a serial number and a certificate stating that the design is an original.

A NEW DOMESTIC BOILER

The domestic hot-water boiler is fast changing its outward appearance and inward efficiency. A well-known manufacturer has brought out a thermostatically controlled boiler, suitable for coke, anthracite, and other normal boiler-fuels, with a heating capacity of up to 75 square feet of radiating surface and a 30-gallon storage-cylinder for domestic hot water. For radiator heating alone 150 square feet can be serviced. The grate is on the circular rotating principle; there is secondary air-supply over the fuel-bed for complete combustion. An ash-screen allows riddling to be dust-free and the ash-pit door is pedal-operated. The appearance is modern, all working parts being concealed by the cream stove-finished exterior; the top-plate is in black vitreous enamel. The size is 32 inches high, 18½ inches wide, and 20 inches deep.

VERSUS THE CHIMNEY FIRE

A high-pressure jet-rose for use in dealing with a chimney fire seems likely to interest any householder with painful experience of this type of fire. The rose is for joint attachment to standard chimney-rods and a stirrup-pump; that is to say, it has a water connection for the hose and an adapter connection for securing to chimney-rods. The rose is flanked by two small clearance wheels to enable it to pass up the flue. The jet can be concentrated at the most severe area of fire, and the usual trouble with ordinary hose application—flooding with filthy water in the fireplace and on the floor around—is likely to be obviated or greatly reduced.

A PORTABLE SEARCHLIGHT

A portable searchlight, battery-operated, should find a diversity of uses in farming, engineering, mining, and general industry. The new appliance has a long-penetration beam, and the light from it can be widely diffused. The holder of the bulb is adjustable for focusing in conjunction with the parabolic reflector, made of silver-plated brass. Obviously a powerful battery is needed; indeed, the searchlight is manufactured by a company specialising in battery manufacture. The battery in the portable unit is a 6-8-volt six-cell alkaline battery; it can be left indefinitely in any state of charge or discharge without the slightest risk of deterioration. A full charge will give three to four hours' light on the main filament of the bulb (3 amps) and about twenty hours' on the reserve filament (.5 amp). The appliance, with a handle for carrying, weighs 13 lb., and measures 7½ by 5½ by 8½ inches.

ALL-NIGHT FIREGUARDS

Two types of close-mesh fireguards designed specially for use with the all-night or continuous-burning firegrates deserve mention. The smaller model clips securely into position with a pair of iron prongs that will fit the front of most grates of this modern kind. The other guards the full depth of the fireplace and stands on the hearth, forming a complete canopy over the fireplace opening. There is a square aperture at the base to allow access to the draught-control knob of the grate without involving removal of the guard. Each type is available in gilt or bronze finish; the mesh is ½ inch. The prices are most reasonable.

SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE

A MAGNETISED BOTTLE-OPENER

There seemed to be no room for new ideas in the common operation of removing a metal cap, or crown cork, from a sealed bottle of mineral-water or beer, but human inventiveness apparently thrives upon challenge. A new appliance, though still relying for the force of operation upon the traditional hook-over grip principle, is nevertheless new, because it is given a magnetised head powerful enough to attract and hold the metal cap, thus preventing it flying off and falling on the floor or on the table. It is perhaps not greatly important to save the work of picking up displaced caps—though one can think of exceptions—but the risk of stains or splashes on carpets or clean cloths is also obviated. The opener operates with a downward movement, for, it is said, propulsion downward is easier and more natural.

SOUNDER ORANGES

Both in this country and the United States a relatively cheap and simple organic chemical seems likely to exercise big effects upon the distribution of oranges and possibly of other citrus fruits as well. A major cause of loss in handling the fruit in cases is attack by fungus organisms; such attacks are frequently followed by large-scale rotting. Diphenyl, a substance with anti-fungal properties, can be used to prevent this. A well-known English marmalade-manufacturing firm this year stored for ten weeks two cases of Seville oranges from the same consignment. In one case the fruits were wrapped in papers impregnated with a small percentage of diphenyl; in the other, they were wrapped in ordinary paper. The treated case at the end of the test provided sound fruit; almost all the fruit in the other case had rotted to a squelchy mass. Thus, over an abnormally long period of storage diphenyl had protected the fruit from deterioration. Obviously for the large-scale user of oranges, for juice or marmalade production, this simple means of protection offers major economic benefits. In America the Californian citrus industry has long been suffering from the handicap of being at a

greater distance from main markets than the Florida industry. As a result, the Florida orange, which is more suitable for juice-extraction than eating as fruit, has in canned or bottled form been displacing the Californian orange, better suited for eating. The use of diphenyl will overcome wastage and off-flavouring developments during the longer journey of the Californian oranges to their main markets. Thus, a proportionately small quantity of a chemical may restore the balance in a high-tonnage market, although profound changes have lately been taking place in that balance.

A GLASS SINK-TRAP

A famous British firm specialising in goods made from heat-resistant glass has now introduced a trap for sink waste-pipes made entirely of this glass. With this trap it is possible to see when waste matter is accumulating and threatening a stoppage. The trap is ingeniously fitted with a spring-controlled stopper, a type sometimes used for mineral-water bottles; unfastening the spring releases the stopper and enables the trap to be emptied. The trap has to be connected to the sink and outlet-pipe with metal flanges, but these fitting operations can be performed without skilled labour. Traps are made in all sizes to fit standard sink waste-outlets.

DEFEATING SEASICKNESS

The virtues of various seasickness cures were discussed recently in one of the most famous British medical journals. The best remedy at present was said to be promethazine, because of its long action and freedom from other effects. For this drug, a thrice-daily dosage is needed. A new synthetic Belgian drug was the only remedy that seemed effective on a single daily dose basis. However, for short sea-journeys a single dose of 1 milligram of hyoscine hydrobromide was recommended. This information, in conjunction with medical advice, may be useful for those who have to endure agony of body and mind when sea-voyages are undertaken.

TO CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.

Phloxes

I WASN'T surprised to find when visiting Balmoral that phloxes were very popular indeed there. The name 'phlox' means 'flame,' referring, of course, to the brilliance of the fine heads—originally red-flowered. The phlox came to us from America in 1725. There are pinks, purples, whites, salmons, scarlets—and the newer bluish-purples.

Most people find phloxes very useful, for they come into bloom after the great mass of June- and July-flowering plants are over, and they are in season before the main autumn show. If you wish, therefore, to use this perennial in a mixed border, try planting it in clumps towards the centre of the border.

The best time to plant the phlox is in the spring, as, if you leave it until the autumn, it may succumb to a bad winter. It should be spaced out 18 inches apart in the border, having good clumps of five or so plants. The ground should previously have been deeply dug and given a good dressing of well-rotted vegetable refuse or dung between the top and bottom spit. If the land is light it must have horticultural peat incorporated into the top 3 or 4 inches, after a good soaking has been given. In heavy soils the peat is added to the land without the soaking. Then apply a good fish-manure at 3 to 4 ounces to the square yard; and in the sandy soils it will also be necessary to distribute wood ashes evenly at half-a-pound per square yard. It is well worth while preparing the ground properly, for the phlox responds to good treatment.

During the early part of the year it is necessary to be careful about clean cultivation. Give mulchings of thoroughly-soaked horticultural peat around the plants to a depth of one inch or so. You may, if you wish, use lawn-mowings instead. These top-dressings will be applied in June as the weather gets warmer, with the object of keeping the moisture in the soil down below. Worms love to come up and pull the organic matter into the ground. So the humus content of the soil is increased. Late every spring remove all but about eight of the best shoots per plant.

Fortunately the phlox does not need staking in the normal garden. The stems should be

strong enough to bear the big panicked flower-heads. After the first year's flowering it may be necessary to take out every other plant so as to leave 3 feet between the remaining plants. You will, however, only need to do this if a high state of fertility has been ensured. The result of a first year's thinning is that the clumps may be left down another three years before they are divided and the propagation will normally be carried out by division or side-shoots. You must propagate vegetatively as seeds do not reproduce the type.

The normal division of roots sometimes proves unsatisfactory owing to eel-worm trouble, so the cuttings are generally taken in May. The eel-worm rises upwards in the film of water outside the stem and enters the leaf, and thus what is called 'the double-cutting' method is sometimes adopted. After the cuttings have been struck, pinch off the top of the cuttings and strike that. This is satisfactory, if the eel-worm has not reached that point. Destroy the rest of the cutting.

The best way of ensuring freedom from eel-worm is to propagate by root-cuttings from washed roots. Simply dig the phlox up and wash its roots thoroughly in plenty of running water and then take root-cuttings 2 inches long. Insert these into sandy soil under cloches or in frames during February.

You may find that you have to wait two years from the time the cuttings are struck until the plant is actually producing first-class flowers. The best blooms, however, are produced during this two-year period—unless you adopt the strict deshoooting methods in the subsequent spring periods. Those who insist on digging up the phlox every third year are afraid of the eel-worm attack—and it is undoubtedly true that after the plants have been down for a long period the eel-worms get their chance. Perhaps the plants are less vigorous or the centre of each clump has become old, and so more susceptible.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

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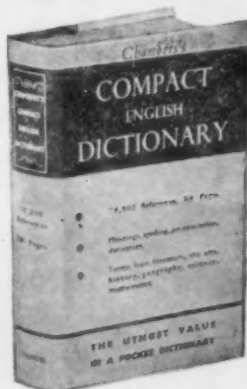
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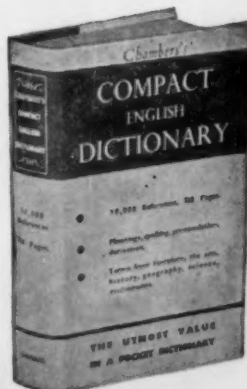
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